

# THE LONDON READER

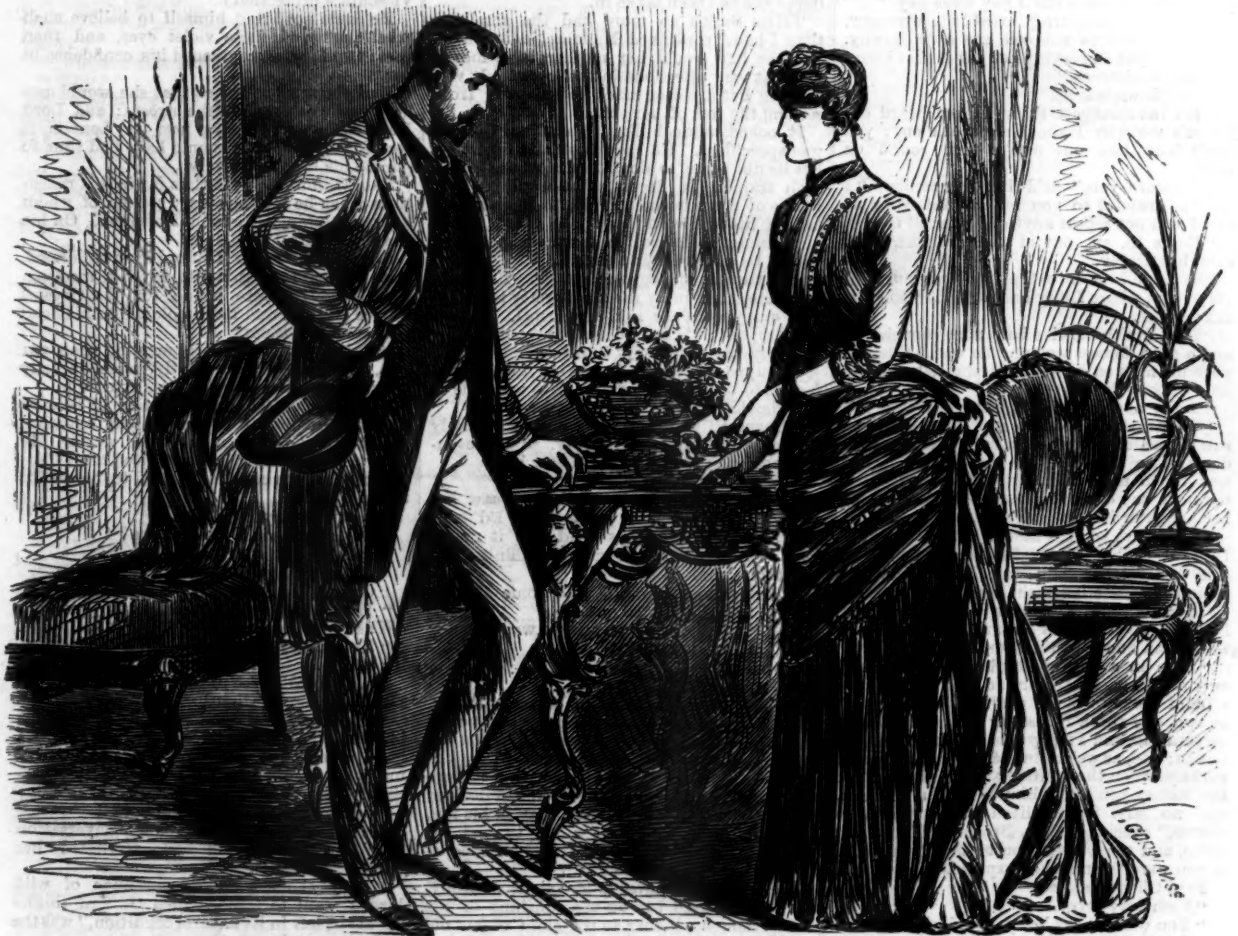
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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



["OH! I THOUGHT YOU WERE GOING TO BE MARRIED, MR. CLIFFORD, AND HAD COME UP TO TOWN TO CHOOSE FRESH FURNITURE!"]

## DOLLY'S LEGACY.

### CHAPTER VI.

To go back to an afternoon some weeks before Viscount Devereux and his friends went down to Field Royal, a cold, bleak, January day, before the remains of poor Mrs. Smith had been laid to rest in Brompton cemetery.

The wind blew keenly; there was no winter sunshine to brighten the leaden sky; there was something terribly depressing in the thick, heavy atmosphere, and people seemed to find this out, for very few pedestrians were to be seen in the fashionable quarter of London.

One man, however, who evidently belonged to the upper ten thousand, was walking across St. James's Park at a brisk pace, making evidently for the direction of Victoria-station. He stopped at a large flower shop not three minutes from the terminus, and purchased a huge bunch of violets, bordered with fresh green ferns, just a delicious re-

minder that in spite of the present cold, bleak winter in a few months the spring sunshine would be pouring warm and genial rays upon the earth.

He was a handsome man, past his first youth, but still in the prime of youth, a man whose face you had but to look into to trust; whose dark brown eyes inspired confidence; a tall, stately man, with a thorough English walk, whom all dumb animals loved, and little children clung to instinctively as though they felt he was their friend.

He took the flowers in his hand and walked quickly on, looking at them from time to time with almost tender admiration.

"They are like her," he muttered to himself. "The moment I saw her I recalled the flower Viola used to call her own; and she is like Viola, too—as like as a child can be to her mother. I wonder what Mrs. Smith is like? What a fool I am to dwell upon the mad idea that haunts me! I wish I had gone in the other night and solved the problem for myself. One look in her face and I must have known whether I saw Viola. Seventeen years could make no change in her past my recognition.

What a fool I am!" he resumed, after a pause. "Nearly eighteen years ago I loved a woman who had no thought but for her husband. I have never seen her—I have believed her dead; and yet the sight of a pair of violet eyes, the thrill of a girlish voice, has had power to bring my old dream back to me, and make me forget the flight of time."

He was knocking at the door of a house in Elizabeth-street now, and soon a tidy widow woman came to answer it, much surprised at his aristocratic appearance.

"Can I see Mrs. Smith?"

The woman stared.

"She don't live here, sir."

For a moment he hesitated. He knew this was the house where he parted from Dolly. Could that fair-haired girl have been a deceiver, and the story she told him have been one long falsehood?

"I can't understand it," he said to the woman, smiling kindly at her, as though to ask her aid. "I am sure this is the number I was told. I am seeking a Mrs. Smith with one daughter, engaged in dress-making."

The woman's face cleared of the suspicious



expression it had borne, but she seemed even more bewildered.

"You seem to know all about her, sir."

The gentleman felt more and more puzzled.

"I had the pleasure of seeing the young lady home," he said, slowly, "one evening a little before Christmas, and I told her then I hoped to call soon and have some conversation with her mother."

Mrs. Brown looked at him steadily.

"You don't mean her any harm, sir? Mrs. Smith was a decent woman, and if she owed you money I'm sure she'll pay some day."

"My good creature," cried the stranger, "Mrs. Smith does not owe me a halfpenny. My sole object in seeking her out is that I may offer her assistance."

Mrs. Brown stared.

"It's the strangest thing I ever heard of! I don't see why I shouldn't speak out; you don't look like one who'd turn round on me."

"I assure you," said her companion, "I shall be grateful to you for any information, and I will not repeat anything you tell me."

"Come in, sir, out of the draught," she said, hospitably.

She took him into the front parlour, the very room where Dolly had told her story to her mother.

"Mrs. Smith *did* live here, sure enough, sir, and a good, honest woman she was. She was with me night on a year, and she left all in a hurry about three weeks ago."

"Left; but you said she never was here?"

"I am coming to that, sir. The night you saw Miss Dolly home—I mind it well, for cabs don't often stop at this house—Mrs. Smith was up to near midnight, but she went out the next day directly after breakfast leaving her daughter in bed."

"Why are you not at the establishment?" I said to Dolly. She just shook her head, and said her mother 'ad gone, and made her promise not to stir till she came in."

"I daresay Mrs. Smith was gone three hours. When she got back she called me into this room, and shut the door."

"I'm in a bit of trouble, Mrs. Brown," says she, "and I want you to help me. I owe a bit of money which I can't pay for a month or two, so I think I'd better go away. Make up your bill, and I'll pay a week extra instead of notice; and, as we've always been good friends, perhaps when the gentleman comes to ask for his money you'll tell him it's all a mistake, and no Mrs. Smith lived here, which, in course," concluded Mrs. Brown, "I promised to do, and when I saw you to-day I jumped to it you were the man she expected."

Paul Clifford sighed.

"I am very sorry."

"You want to see her particularly?"

"I am very much interested in her daughter. She had a splendid voice, and I thought with a musical education—"

"You meant to bring her out at one of the 'alls. Law, now!" said Mrs. Brown, "what a pity she's gone! I daresay she'd have made her fortune."

Paul Clifford thought it unnecessary to tell her she was quite mistaken.

"Could you tell me anything about Mrs. Smith that would give me a clue to finding her?"

"I never knew nothing; she was too close."

"How did they live?"

"She mended lace for the shops. A rare hand she was at it."

"I suppose she was a widow?"

"Law, yes, sir, and quite an old one, too. She was much more like the child's grand-mother."

"Nice looking?"

"Not a bit. Dolly must have got her good looks from her father; her mother had none. Just a plain-spoken, sensible woman."

"Thank you"—he slipped a sovereign into her hand. "Pray let me make up for your loss of time."

Mrs. Brown stared with delight. The un-

expected gift seemed to quicken her intellect. Paul had not got to the bottom of the street when she came running after him.

"Sir, it's just come to me, all on a sudden, you might hear of Dolly at the establishment."

The idea seemed to Paul Clifford a good one. He took a cab and drove to Madame Marguerite's. We know the disappointment that awaited him. The stately principal was far from being as complaisant as poor Mrs. Brown. She told her visitor frankly she believed she had been taken in.

"Miss Smith no more had the smallpox than I had," continued Madame, indignantly. "If she had would her mother have moved her that very afternoon in the snow? It was nothing but a clever trick to save her from serving the rest of her time."

It looked so much like it that Paul Clifford was speechless. He kept his faith in Dolly, but he did begin to doubt her mother. With such training in deceit what would be the future of the fair young girl who so reminded him of his first wild love?

"I must apologise for trespassing on your time," he said, rising to depart.

"There's no apology needed, sir. I daresay you were taken in by the girl's pretty face, and took every word she said for gospel. I know I did myself; I'd have doubted any one of my hands rather than Dolly Smith."

"I suppose it would be asking too great a favour to beg you to communicate with me if you should receive any news of her?"

"I expect I've had the last news I'm likely to have," said Madame, sharply. "Two evenings ago, New Year's Night, I saw her."

"Saw Dolly?"

"Yes," said Madame, coolly. "I saw her with my own eyes. I don't think I'd have believed it if anyone else had told it me of her. I always liked the girl; I couldn't think she'd have sunk so low."

Almost beside himself with some strange inward fear, Paul cried out—

"In the name of Heaven what was the poor girl doing, madame?"

"Singing."

"Singing!"

"Singing in the streets for alms! Fancy, sir, a girl who had sat here among my young ladies, who had been allowed to assist in making dresses for the nobility!"

Paul Clifford walked away with a strange sadness upon him. He never quite decided what part Dolly Smith would play in his life. He had meant to offer the widow to send her daughter abroad, and defray the whole expenses of her musical education.

He had meant never to lose sight of Dolly. He had pictured her as the sunshine of his home, though whether as the child of his old age or the wife of his bosom he did not know; but for old sake's sake, for the memory of his first love, whose face she bore, he had meant to make her future his care.

And now where was she?

Vanished like a shadow, disappeared as utterly and entirely as a snowflake beneath the rays of the noonday sun.

What had become of her? Where was she? Could that last assertion of Madame Marguerite's be true?

Looked at in any light the history was a strange one. These people had been living in Elizabeth-street three weeks ago, apparently settled there for years. Dolly herself had spoken of her work at Madame Marguerite's as only to be allotted to set up for herself in the country.

Yet within four-and-twenty hours mother and daughter had forsaken home, residence, and occupation. What could it mean?

How could he acquit Mrs. Smith of falsehood? Indeed, he could not separate her statements, and tell where truth began and falsehood ended. She seemed even to have gone out of her way to tell untruths.

She might surely have been content with shifting her lodgings without inventing the fable of the small-pox. Then what occasion

to fabricate that little history of owing money for Mrs. Brown's ear?

No, the more he thought of it the more perplexed and bewildered Paul Clifford felt till he could have gone almost to the length of wishing he had not passed down Regent-street that particular December, and so had never seen the syren who so troubled him.

In that case there would have been no one to rescue her from Lord Devereux. As he pondered over the story one fear would haunt him—had the miserable Dolly accepted the Viscount's protection?

He could not bring himself to believe such cruel 'shame of those violet eyes, and then these two facts strengthened his confidence in her.

Had she sunk so low as that she would not have needed to sing in the streets; and Lord Devereux's *fiancée* being now in London it seemed impossible he should have had time to pursue his fancy for Dolly.

Paul Clifford had got thus far in his reflections when he met the very person of whom he was thinking—Viscount Devereux. On his arm was Lady Madeline.

She had known Mr. Clifford from childhood, and it was impossible to avoid a meeting. The lovers (?) were bound for the Crystal Palace Bazaar, and Paul took it into his head to accompany them.

"This is a more peaceful meeting than our last," said Devereux, lightly, when a lady friend had claimed Madeline's attention.

The Viscount had no intention of bearing malice. He meant to encourage the beautiful singer; but he was a man of the world. He knew that in society he must often meet Paul Clifford, and he could not afford to be on ill-terms with him.

"Yes," shortly.

"Have you seen the bird since?"

Paul looked at him steadily.

"No. Have you?"

"Once."

"Where?" interrupted Paul, quickly.

"What was she doing?"

"The usual occupation of a bird—sing-

ing!"

Mr. Clifford's eyes flashed and he looked at him. Devereux laughed lightly.

"I hold my first opinion—it is too pretty a bird to be left in a wild, savage state; but I have not caged it yet. You seem so anxious I may as well give you that piece of information."

"Just what are you talking of?"

Madeline had finished her conversation with her friend, and had overheard her *fiancé's* last words.

"Only about a certain specimen of wild bird I want to tame, which Clifford thinks should be left in its natural condition," was the audacious reply.

"I hate caged birds," said Madeline, gravely. "Poor little prisoners! it makes me sad to look at them!"

"I quite agree with you, Lady Madeline; even the song of a caged bird is like plaintive music!"

"Music does make one sad sometimes," said Madeline, thoughtfully. "I know the other night—"

"Madeline, don't inflict that history on Clifford. You have told everyone a dozen times already!"

"I should like to hear it," interposed Paul. "Tell me what happened the other night?"

And she told him the tale we know already.

For weeks after that afternoon Paul Clifford lingered in London. He positively haunted the streets of Kensington. He made inquiries in every direction. He spent money, too; but he found no clue to the girl he sought.

The pretty child to whom for one brief hour he had been father, guardian, and friend seemed to have vanished from the world as completely as though the turbid waters of the river played restlessly over her body.

It was natural that Mr. Clifford should call upon Lord Charteris. He had known the peer intimately before he went to India, and the



courtesy was therefore due; but it was strange how, having once been to the handsome house in Kensington, he should find himself a frequent visitor.

Lord Charteris "took" to him at once. He seemed like a relic of his youth. Really he was young enough to have been the Earl's son; but it pleased the latter to treat him as a friend of equal dignity.

"Papa has quite stolen you away," said Lady Madeline to him one afternoon, when he was waiting for the Earl to accompany him to a political meeting. "I wonder what has become of the business that brought you to town?"

"It is at a standstill."

"Why?"

She had never seen such earnestness in his manner, never seen such suppressed passion in his voice, as when he answered her.

"Because the corner-stone of the whole is lost, that for which I planned and hoped has disappeared!"

"I wish you would tell me what the business was?"

"Impossible!"

"I want to know."

"I regret I cannot tell you."

"I asked papa the other night, and he said he did not know either!"

"Precisely!"

"So we amused ourselves by guessing."

"Indeed!"

"And I want to know if we guessed right. If I tell you our conjectures will you say who was correct?"

He bowed ceremoniously, as though in assent.

"Papa declares you have written a book, and are looking for a publisher. Well!"

"The Earl is mistaken."

She was so long before she spoke again that he asked,—

"And your guess, Lady Madeline?"

"Oh, I thought you were going to be married, and had come up to town to choose fresh furniture, and such things!"

"Your thoughts ran on marriage, Lady Madeline?"

"No, they don't!"

"What did your father say to your guesses?"

"He said it was about as probable as that he was looking out for another countess. It's not very flattering to you; but papa looks on you as just as old as himself. I believe he imagines you are his twin brother, and he was sixty-five last birthday!"

"I cannot boast so many years as that; but I daresay I am what you call an old man!"

"You don't seem old," said Madeline, dreamily.

"I shall be forty in June!"

"Don't put it like that," pleaded Madeline, softly; "say you are thirty-nine!"

He laughed.

"Doesn't even that sound venerable to you?"

"No."

Lord Charteris came in then, and the gentlemen started on their expedition. Who would have guessed that when the door had closed upon them the spoilt heiress, the pretty, petted Madeline went right to her own room, and throwing herself on her bed wept as though her very heart was breaking?

"I love him!" she murmured amid her sorrows. "Oh, how very wicked and unwomanly I must be! He cares no more for the drawing-room table, and I love him with all my heart! He never answered me—never told me if my guess was correct, and he had really come up here to see about his wedding! Oh, how I shall hate his wife! What an idiot I am! What have I ever been to him? Nothing but a troublesome child, to whom he has been kind. Well, he will marry some horrid woman, and I shall be Jack's wife. We shall live close together, I suppose, and the world will expect me and Mrs. Clifford to be great friends! Oh, the misery, the wretchedness of it all! If I could only die soon—only not live till June!"

For as things were now settled Viscount Devereux's wedding was to take place in the month of roses.

Everything has its use in life; the little trifles we think so slightly of are often links in the long chain of circumstances that make up our fate.

The flowers Paul had purchased to give to Dolly, the fragrant violets and fresh green ferns became quite an impediment to him when he left Elizabeth-street and started in the direction of Madame Marguerite's. He could not take them with him; there was something incongruous to his taste in promenading the streets of London with a bouquet in his hand. It was too large to seem other than it had been meant for—a floral tribute to a lady. Paul blushed to think what any of his friends would say could they catch sight of him carrying such a burden. So when he turned into a narrow side street leading to Buckingham Palace-read he watched his opportunity, and when no one was passing he tossed the flowers on to the pavement; then he moved quickly on, and never troubled himself as to the fate of the bouquet.

It was picked up by the next person who went down that narrow street—a woman, well, she had once been that gracious thing—had been beautiful and fair to see not so many years ago, but her charms had departed now. In the flushed, bold face, the eyes so fierce with their glittering stare, in a nameless sort of recklessness that pervaded her whole being, you knew by instinct what she was, and what had made her so.

She took the flowers with a feverish hand, and looked at them more tenderly than she often looked at anything. Then a tear came to her fine black eyes, and she sighed wearily.

"It seems like a bit of home," she said, as though speaking to the flowers; "when I was a girl and used to help my father tend his blooms. I can see the old cottage again, with its quiet lodge, over which Bertie used to bend his handsome head. Oh! how he loved me in those days! I wonder if he'd know me now?"

"I'll take them round to the child," she muttered; "maybe it'll do her good to smell them. Poor little one! she's fading fast away. Well, better that perhaps than that she should live to grow such as I am."

She walked on and on, still carrying the flowers, when a heavy fall of sleet came on. It was pitiful to see how she sheltered them under the tattered shawl, as though they must be protected from the wet, whatever happened to herself. She walked a long way; perhaps it seemed further than it was, because she chose out all the narrow, dingy streets, and purposely avoided the broader thoroughfares, but at last she stopped.

It was somewhere in the heart of Chelsea, somewhere in that region of which the boundary on one side is the King's-road and on the other the Fulham-road; somewhere in that labyrinth of streets, in one narrower than the rest, which, perhaps from irony, has the title Eden-place, the woman stopped. The houses in Eden-place are old, it is emphatically their greatest point. Someday, when the whole neighbourhood was different, they may have been the only small houses to be had for love or money; they boast about eight rooms each, and each room has a separate tenant.

The woman—her name was Madge, she bore no other throughout the "Place"—did not knock at the door, to do so would have been a superfluity, since it stood always open. She mounted the rickety stairs slowly, wearily, till she came to the top. An old man stood on the landing mending shoes; he had probably come out there because it was the lightest place, and the short January day was closing in, but the woman hailed him anxiously.

"How is she now, Father Lemon? not worse, surely. You weren't looking for me?"

"Not I," said the old man, with a cheerful whistle; "she's asleep, leastways she was an hour ago when I looked in to see to the fire; it's burning nicely, a beautiful fire you'll find there."

Burning nicely! Reader, the grate was about the size of your sugar basin, and the bit of fire in it was so minute you did not see (or, what was more to the point, feel) it until you were touching almost the bars. I refuse the adjective "beautiful" to that handful of coals. The room was on the same scale as the fire, furniture to match, an iron bedstead, a chair, and a table; the old-fashioned cupboard, of course, might hold other treasures, but these were the only ones disclosed to view.

The only ones? Stay!

On the bed, covered by a thin blanket, was a little girl, a child of five or six, perhaps, but so thin and small she might easily have passed for three; a child whose face made you wonder what she possibly could be doing in such a place, how she possibly could have such a mother!

For the woman who bent over her *was* her mother; the likeness between the two faces was thrilling, only where the mother's was defiant and repelling the child's was sweet and attractive.

The mother's black hair and dark eyes were repeated in the little girl; but surely, Madge could never have had the innocent wistfulness of her daughter? Surely her sullen brow could never have had the purity and serenity of the little girl's?

"Look here, see what mother's brought you?" and Madge eagerly displayed the flowers.

Beautiful violets! How their fragrance brightened the little room!—how the child's dark eyes sparkled as she saw them!

"Who gave them to you, mother?"

"No one; I found them, child."

"How sorry whoever lost them must be; don't you think so, mother?"

Mother didn't answer; she was thinking a little, dreamily, that there were things whose loss no sorrow could bring back, no tears atone for; the loss of something gone long years before was troubling her—the loss of something she had well-nigh left off regretting until the violets taught her.

They were put in water, the bouquet unfastened first to be very sure that every stalk might feel the refreshing moisture. Lena lay with her dark eyes watching them, and then she said, half wistfully,—

"I wish I had a garden. Mother did you ever have a garden, ever see the flowers grow?"

Rarely did she speak of her past, it was so sad, but her child's question must be answered.

"Oh, yes, Lena; your grandfather was a gardener. I lived in a little cottage smothered with roses and jasmine."

"I wish grandfather was alive," breathed the child. "Mother, couldn't we go to that cottage now?"

Madge shook her head.

"Was I born there, mother?"

"No, child; I left the country before you were born."

"With my father?" said Lena, wistfully. "Mother, I do so wonder what he was like; I wish I could have seen him. I have never heard one word of him you know, mother, and I yet he was my father."

He was her father, she was his child—the only child who, while the mother lived, had the right to bear his name. He was a rich man, and yet his wife and child lived in beggary. What did it mean?

Madge bustled about and got tea, a very different meal from that we call by the name; a crust of bread, a cup of colourless fluid, that was all; but throughout the repast the child's eyes wandered to the flowers. It was easy to see she loved them more than meat and drink.

"And but for me she might wear velvet and furs," thought the miserable mother; "but for me she might have a happy home. Oh! Lena, my child, my darling, my little comforter, would you ever forgive your mother if you knew all she has robbed you of?"

In the early morning light, awakened by the child's hacking cough, Madge knew at a glance her darling was worse. She dressed herself in her worn clothes and went out in the driving snow to find the parish doctor, the man appointed to cure the poor. There are many tales abroad against those who fill these posts, but there never was a kinder man than Mr. Gibbs. He received the poor outcast with as much courtesy as though she had been a lady. She was a mother in anxiety for her only child; to him that was a title for pity.

"I must give you some medicine," he said, kindly; "but I can't do anything. The child will never be better in London—never!"

"And the country might save her?"

"It might. I do not say it would. Remember, it is but a chance."

Only a chance! But what mother of an only child would leave that chance untried, especially when that child was all she had—her one wee lamb?

"I never asked him for a penny," she muttered to herself; "I swore I never would. But it might save her life, my innocent child, my child and his—my little one, who is all I have."

She would not go home, she would not give herself a chance of shrinking from her task. She walked straight on—wearily, oh! so wearily—with a heart sinking at what she was about to do. Hers was a sad history—the old, old story of woman's frailty, only set to a new setting. The gardener's daughter had been wooed by a man of far higher rank and station, but the wooing had ended in a plain gold ring and a church ceremony. The black spot in the story was later. They were a totally unsuited pair. She had never loved him truly, and as the first glamour of his passion wore off, and he found this out, he let her see he regretted their union. She drove him to it by her wild, reckless ways. There was a false friend by her ready to fan the flame of jealousy, until at last Magdalen had left her husband—and not alone.

The child was born five months later. She was then penniless, deserted, alone. She never made any appeal to her husband; she never even made known to him the birth of his daughter. He had not chosen to take the freedom the law would have given him. Few people had known of his marriage, and so he went his way supposed to be an eligible bachelor—really a forsaken husband. It was six years and more since she had seen his face, and yet his wife had resolved this day to appeal to his pity.

She knew where he lived. Even in the first days of their married life he had retained his chambers to see his friends and get through business (though being a rich man's only son it was little business he troubled after). She could have found her way to those rooms blindfold. They were in a half-forgotten corner of Fulham. Six years ago they had been almost in the country—even now they had a fresher look than many of the thoroughfares near.

"He will never see me," thought Madge, as she rang the bell with despairing fingers.

But she was mistaken. The middle-aged man who appeared made no attempt to deny his master—he really seemed to have expected his visitor. Madge wondered whether her husband had turned philanthropist, and spent his time in interviewing the poor and ragged!

"Rap at that door and walk in," said the man, coolly, "the master is expecting you."

She obeyed. The voice that said "come in" awoke every slumbering memory in her heart. A moment more, and husband and wife stood face to face. He was eight or nine-and-twenty. She was three years younger, but to look at the two you would have judged her at least ten year older than the handsome, noble-looking man who sat at an easel sketching. He looked up as she entered, gave one start, and rose to his feet—white as death.

"Magdalen!"

"Yes," she said, brokenly, "it is I. Don't

speak harshly to me, Bertie, I can't bear it. You must have some idea of my misery by seeing me here. You don't think surely that anything but real want would bring me to you?"

He did not speak harshly. Seeing her then as she was, and thinking of her as she had been, an awful remorse filled his heart. Had he failed in any measure in his duty to her? Could it be his fault that she was thus?

"What do you want?"

"Money."

The word cost her an awful effort. But for that little child at home she would have died sooner than ask him for alms.

He asked her one question—asked her in a sad, grave whisper.

She answered promptly,—

"More than six years ago."

"Why didn't you come sooner?"

"I couldn't. I shouldn't have come to-day only—"

She stopped abruptly.

"I am glad you have," he said, slowly. "I can at least see you want for nothing now. I always meant to make you an allowance."

"To ease your conscience?" tauntingly.

He never answered her. He had taken out his purse, and counted a little pile of sovereigns. He pushed them towards her.

She took one, and pushed the others away.

"Let me have this every week," she said, simply. "A lot of money would be no good to me—it would not do," and shuddered.

"Where shall I send it?"

She named a library in the Fulham-road where letters were taken in, wrapped her shawl around her, and rose to depart. She never asked him for any promise to send the money. She knew this much of the man she had called husband—his word was his bond.

"Good-bye," she said, brokenly. "You have been better to me than I dared to hope for. Bertie, we may never meet again—before I go I wish you'd say you forgive me."

The man's better nature struggled hard with the memory of all he had suffered for and through this woman. The right triumphed.

"I forgive you, Magdalen. You wronged yourself more than me after all."

"Heaven bless him," murmured the woman, who was a wife and yet an outcast, when she was in the bustling streets again, raising her eyes to the wintry sky. "Heaven bless him. If ever I can do him a good turn I will."

But alas! for her good resolution, alas! for them both. She went the wrong way to work him that good turn.

It seemed to Magdalen as she left her husband he must wish for one thing more than aught else—her own death.

"If the child goes," she murmured, sadly, "if this last chance fails, and I have to give up my darling, he'd have his way. I couldn't live without her."

A room in a little snug village close to the Thames, a room as different as possible from that squalid London lodging, a cheerful, respectable landlady, and a pretty garden in front of the house—all this was a new life to the little maid.

And the elder Magdalen, for the child's sake, turned over what she called a "new leaf." She behaved as though she still had a reputation to cherish and maintain. She conquered the awful longing for drink that assailed her, and beyond one journey every week to that library where the husband sent his bounty she never left her child.

Landlady, district visitor, clergyman, one and all thought Mrs. Bertram a most devoted mother. Madge had more friends and sympathy now than she had known for many a day; but, alas! the improvement in the child was only fluctuating. Very soon the Doctor had to break to her mother that she was sinking.

Madge received the news in perfect silence, only when she was alone, and no one could hear her grief, the tears ran down her cheeks, and she murmured,—

"It is my life he has condemned as well as

hers. All that is best of me will die with my child. I might have tried to redeem the past for her sake. Now, when she is gone, I shall be what I was before."

And that meant a drunkard. Oh! the awful restraint she had to place on herself those last weeks—the fearful effort it cost her to keep up her reformation while the feeble spark of the child's life yet lingered—who can say?

It came to an end at last one night—a quiet evening. Lena put her little thin arms round her mother's neck and whispered,—

"Good-bye. I'm going to father."

Poor little one! fatherless and despised here. It would not be reckoned against her in the great hereafter that she had suffered for her mother's sins.

One thing astonished the Doctor when he was making out the certificate of death. The mother confessed to him with a trembling lip the name of Bertram was assumed.

"I have had much trouble, sir," she said, sadly, "and I took the name of Bertram that those who knew me in my better days should not find me out, but I shouldn't like my little girl to be buried with a falsehood."

The Doctor thought what a true faithful woman she was, and inserted the name she whispered to him in the space where he had meant to write Bertram.

After the funeral was over Magdalen sold her wedding-ring to compass her child's burial. The mother packed up her few things and departed.

"I couldn't stay here without my child," she told the Rector. "I've been a bad woman sir. It was just her love kept me straight. I don't care what happens to me now."

But when she got to London her first visit was to the General Post-office. She carried in her hand an envelope containing the certificate of her child's death. The envelope was addressed to her husband.

"I promised I'd do him a good turn if I could," she murmured. "I've heard of dying for the sake of those we love. I wonder if this is a kind of dying for his sake? He'll never know what it cost me to make him happy. Well, he has suffered enough through me. It's well I should bear something for him at last."

And so on the first of the bright May days she posted her letter—posted it with the most generous, unselfish motives; but alas! she told a lie—and lies, however well intentioned, never succeed. This one was destined well-nigh to break two hearts.

(To be continued.)

ENCOURAGE your children early to do their part in the housekeeping. It is good training will help you, and will far, far more help them. We are living in an age when no one can say they will always have the means to enable them to do nothing. Knowledge is power.

ILLUMINATORS.—The Trinity House Committee, which has been carrying on a very complete series of experiments, extending over a period of a year, to determine the relative merits of oil, gas and electricity as illuminating agents for use in lighthouses, has made its report. The conclusion reached is, "that for the ordinary necessities of lighthouse illumination mineral oil is the most suitable and economical illuminant, and that for salient headlands, important land-falls, and places where a very powerful light is required, electricity offers the greatest advantages." The tests were made at the South Foreland lighthouse, where there is a double electric light, which was visited by representatives of the principal governments of the world, while the experiments were going on. Electricity was found to be superior to gas and oil in all weathers and at all distances, whether as a stationary or revolving light; but mineral oil proved much more economical than the other agents, both in respect to first cost and the annual expense of maintenance.



## WANTED AN HEIRESS.

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## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

MR. WILLIAM JONES, otherwise Carrotty Bill, brought to book at the close of a long and varied career, comprising burglaries out of number, and more than one murder, evinced little remorse or anxiety respecting the awkward position relating to the law in which he found himself placed.

"You won't let a man earn an 'onest living, you won't, blarn ye!" was the remark he made on being fetched down from the roof of a house from which he had for several hours defied the force, two energetic members of which had, after a terrible struggle, succeeded in capturing him.

His subsequent behaviour was quite in accordance with the amiable sentiment recorded above. Cool impudence next to ferocious daring appeared to be William Jones's strong point.

When accused, among other charges, of having entered a dwelling-house through the sitting-room window, and possessing himself of the plate, he replied, with some expressive adjectives thrown in, that he was only a parlor boarder, and they, as a rule, were entitled to the use of the best silver.

But, on finding himself sentenced to death for the murder of the policeman, without the least hope of a reprieve, William Jones condescended to regard the subject from a more serious point of view.

He did not whine or rave. He merely sent for the governor of the prison, and made an important statement to him.

"Shouldn't have opened my mouth and split upon myself but for this hanging job," he said, frankly in conclusion. "They can't do any more than hang me, and since they've made up their blessed minds to do that, why the other fellow may as well get the benefit of it, guv'nor."

The other fellow was Vincent Eyre, and the statement volunteered by the condemned man was eventually the means of his being released, with profound regrets that a sentence so undeserved should ever have been passed upon him.

William Jones, taken red-handed by poor Richard Eyre in the act of robbing his chambers, had stabbed the barrister in the struggle that ensued between them. Hearing footsteps approaching, he had then made good his escape without waiting to plunder the body of his victim.

That an innocent man, brother to the one he had killed, was accused of the crime and sentenced to penal servitude for life, troubled William Jones but little so long as he remained at large. His brute instincts all tended towards self-preservation, regardless of the expense to others.

Now that the law had him in its clutches, however, he had enough humanity left in him to effect the release of that man by acknowledging his own guilt, since the confession could not possibly entail more punishment upon him.

Vincent Eyre had become a favourite with all the prison officials, and many of his fellow-convicts. When the governor informed him that important facts recently disclosed would shortly lead to his being released, he fell down in a fainting fit.

He had endured the prospect of life-long imprisonment manfully; all the resources of his strong nature had been strained to meet the unnatural demand upon them; but for this sudden inrush of joy and hope, and restored liberty, he was unprepared. Conscience failed him, and all his forces gave way beneath the overwhelming and unexpected tidings.

His old faithful friend, Doctor Clarke, was at the prison to receive him on the day appointed for his release. As Vincent entered the room, and went towards him with outstretched hands, he broke down and cried like

a child on perceiving the terrible change that had taken place in his appearance.

The massive frame was bowed and shrunken, the dark blue eyes were dim and hollow, the strong swarthy face wore an unhealthy pallor. Prison life had aged Vincent Eyre, and made him look full twenty years older than at the commencement of his sentence.

Dr. Clarke insisted upon Vincent becoming his guest, and Dr. Clarke's housekeeper—a worthy woman, in spite of Mrs. Larkspur's poor opinion of her—took the young man under her motherly wing, and did her utmost to restore him to a better state of health by means of good nursing, and a constant relay of tempting delicacies, calculated to nourish and strengthen his impoverished frame.

He was interviewed and lionised to a great extent, and public sympathy evinced itself towards him in many different forms. Government offered to make him some pecuniary recompense for the suffering he had unjustly undergone, but he promptly refused to accept it. The anguish, the loss of health, the death-in-life that had befallen him were not to be computed, nor could any sum of money, no matter how large, be considered a fair equivalent for those years of penal servitude.

Vincent had a great deal to learn respecting the events that had occurred, and the changes that had taken place in the world during his incarceration. Arthur Joscelyn's marriage afforded him some satisfaction, since it did away with any lingering fears lest a reconciliation should yet be effected between that handsome, superficial dandy, and Gwendoline Massey.

Had he but known of the love cherished for himself by the latter he would not have done her such an injustice as to imagine her still capable of loving Arthur Joscelyn.

Percival Massey's death on the Continent was not long in reaching his ears. What, he wondered anxiously, had become of Gwendoline. Was she still grieving over Joscelyn's unworthiness, and allowing it to spoil her life, to bar the door of her heart against a more lasting and reciprocal love?

Much as he desired to gain some information as to Gwendoline's whereabouts, and her feeling towards himself, he could not make her the subject of constant inquiries without exciting comment.

Vincent scanned the society papers eagerly, but her name was never mentioned in their gossiping, highly-spiced columns. Had she gone into a convent she could not have disappeared more completely from the recognised haunts of fashionable society.

Before going abroad to recruit his health that had suffered severely through his long imprisonment, Vincent paid a visit to his native town.

The townspeople gave him quite an ovation. His release, following hard upon the disclosure that had restored his father's good name, seemed peculiarly appropriate. Faces formerly averted in cold displeasure or contempt now regarded him with an expression of friendliness. He could not go a dozen yards without being button-holed by someone anxious to congratulate him on the auspicious double event; while his wrist fairly ached as he shook hands first with one, then with another, the hearty grips being so many welcome proofs of the kindly feeling and warm interest that still existed towards him in his birthplace.

He broke from his well-meaning detainers at last, and wended his way in the direction of the cemetery.

When he had stood by his father's grave on a former occasion it had been but a green, nameless mound. Now his heart swelled within him as he contemplated the stately marble monument erected over it, a mute witness to the integrity of the deceased, and the loyal, high-principled, fearless nature of the woman he loved—the woman who had taken up his unfinished life-work, and brought it to such a perfect consummation.

The cemetery, situated on a green, sloping hillside, commanded a view of the picturesque

town, snugly nestling in the valley beneath, while far beyond it, like a blue line, sheltered the sea, with here and there a sail gleaming whitely as the sunlight fell upon it.

The exquisitely carved spires of a cathedral sharply defined against the clear blue sky—"frozen music" embodying the sublime harmony of form—appeared in the distance; farms and hamlets embowered in trees met the eye in another direction, while the faint tinkle of a sheep-bell rather added to the impressive silence than otherwise.

The breeze murmuring over the grass, stirring the long grass and ivy with reverent touch, seemed fraught with a message from the dead to the living. In the warm, fragrant, noontide stillness the great heart of God could be heard and felt throbbing through all creation.

With bared head Vincent stood by his father's grave mentally reviewing the past. Absorbed in memories both sweet and painful he did not hear the tall, graceful woman making her way towards the banker's grave until the *frou-frou* of her dress over the long grass attracted his attention, and caused him to look up.

The flowing, stately outline of the generous figure, around which the heavily-draped dress fell in long, artistic folds; the compact, little black bonnet crowning the close-braided plaits of golden hair; the short, crape-bordered veil that enhanced the purity of the beautiful oval face were, details that enabled him to arrive at a just comprehension of the whole.

The blood bounded madly through his veins as he stood face to face with Gwendoline Massey once more.

The gentle, impulsive girl had, since their last meeting, blossomed into the perfect flower of lovely womanhood. Mind and body alike had gone through a subtle process of development.

"Miss Massey!" exclaimed Vincent, as she regarded him without any expression of surprise. "This is an unexpected pleasure. I—I fancied that you were still abroad."

"No; I came back to England immediately after my father's death," she replied, as their hands met in a long, lingering clasp. "I am staying here on a visit, and this cemetery is one of my favourite spots."

She did not think it necessary to explain that her visit to such an out-of-the-way place had been prompted by a desire to view the fruition of the work as exemplified in the costly marble structure raised to the banker's memory, while the faint hope of coming in contact with Vincent Eyre had induced her to make a daily pilgrimage to the cemetery.

"You must allow me to congratulate you upon your release," she said, calmly, raising her great blue eyes to his face, and inwardly grieving over the ravages made by protracted suffering, bravely borne. "I knew from the first you were innocent, Dr. Eyre; that those men had made a frightful mistake in convicting you."

He bowed his head in silent acknowledgment of her sympathy and condolence, while, without exactly knowing why, he felt pained and disappointed.

He could not learn from her calm, self-contained greeting the wild tumultuous joy she had experienced on hearing of his release; he knew nothing of the strain she was putting upon herself to conceal her emotion as she stood before him, so near that the faint, delicate perfume he had always connected with her affected his senses.

"But for you this would not have been erected," he remarked, glancing at the pure, carved marble. "You have left nothing for me to do in my father's cause. For such an ample vindication of his honourable dealing, carried out regardless of the cost to yourself, how am I to thank you?"

"I require no thanks," she replied, toying idly with a spray of ivy. "Doctor Eyre, let us be plain with each other. Previous to his death my father made a full confession to me

acknowledging his guilt, and gratefully dwelling upon the forbearance, the exemption from disgrace and punishment extended towards him by you. Such a debt can never be repaid. In attempting to do justice to the victim of his want of principle, and to free his memory from any smirch or stain, not for one moment did I imagine that I was lessening that debt. It was a simple act of duty."

She could allude in terms of passionate thanksgiving to Vincent Eyre's self-abnegation in the past, while she refrained from any allusion to the motive that had influenced him in sparing her father, namely, his love for herself.

Upon such a topic her lips must perforce remain sealed. Vincent, longing to press her to his heart and cover her sweet face with kisses, mistook her reason for remaining silent. Believing her still to be in love with Jocellyn, and embarrassed by a sense of obligation towards himself that she had no means of lessening, he forbore to speak one word of the pent-up love surging within him. Least gratitude should induce her to yield what love would fain have bestowed in a very different direction, upon another man.

Love, and love alone, would satisfy him. If she would not give him that, then he would accept nothing at her hands.

Mutually perplexed and ill at ease, the man and woman within whose breasts warm, throbbing, newly-revived hopes, and fears, and anticipations were waking, threaded their way in and out among the grass-grown graves, talking of many things, but never approaching the subject nearest and dearest to them both.

"He has ceased to love me," thought Gwendoline, in sadness unutterable. "He is angry both with himself and me to think how much he has condoned and renounced on my account. Were it all to be gone through again he would act very differently."

"As far apart as ever," was his mental soliloquy. "Well, it is not her fault that she has no love to give me. I will not reproach her for it, or pain her needlessly by alluding to the fruitless hopes I have indulged in lately."

"Are you going to make a long stay in this neighbourhood?" he inquired, as they reached the gate of the cemetery.

"No, I return to town this evening," she rejoined. "I have made my home in London, and I seldom leave it."

Not for some hours after their chill, conventional leave-taking did it occur to Vincent that he had not even asked for her address in town.

"What a fool I am!" he exclaimed. "It seems to me that destiny is dead against our ever coming together."

#### CHAPTER XXXIX.

AFTER that chance meeting with Gwendoline Vincent Eyre deferred his departure from England in the hope of encountering her again, and coming to a better understanding with her.

First one excuse, then another, was put forward to account for his reluctance to depart, till Dr. Clarke lost all patience with him and rated him soundly for his indecision.

Vincent had yet another reason for delaying his departure.

He wished to ascertain what had become of Sandy MacNab's diary and the papers he had described to Richard as being hidden in the lid of his box.

The written deposition Vincent had himself destroyed, but the diary and the papers, direct proof of Percival Massey's guilt, might still be in existence.

Should they fall into unscrupulous hands they might be used to extort money from Gwendoline, and occasion her pain and annoyance. If possible he must obtain them ere they did any mischief, always supposing them not to have been destroyed.

The landlord of the "British Lion," on being cautiously interrogated as to what had become of the Scotchman's personal belongings, to use his own expression, "cut up rough!"

He couldn't see what right anybody had to come annoying him with questions about a drunken old fellow who had died in his debt several years ago, and whose bits of things put together hardly covered what he owed.

Had he appropriated them in lieu of rent? Of course he had. He wasn't such a fool as to see them walked off from under his very nose by somebody else. Had he the box in which Sandy had kept his poor things still in his possession? No, he hadn't; and, working himself up into a passion, he'd go considerably beyond Jericho before he answered any more questions.

A sovereign placed in his dirty palm produced a magical effect. His manner grew less surly, and circumstances previously forgotten came back to his mind as if they had happened only yesterday.

After emptying the box of its contents he had given it to the girl, to be sure he had. It was a ramshackle old thing, only fit to be chopped up for firewood, but she had been glad of it to keep her clothes in, and when she went away the box went with her.

As to her present situation, she might be living with a Mrs. Skinner, in Church-street; but he wouldn't be positive, that kind of gal being fond of frequent change.

The "British Lion" had witnessed several arrivals and departures, since the Irish baggage in question had been summarily bundled out on a charge of helping herself from the till to supply the wants of a soldier sweetheart.

Vincent Eyre went to Church-street with a very faint hope of finding either the girl or the box.

An air of shabby, broken-down gentility pervaded this ecclesiastical neighbourhood. Its fourth-rate houses, with their pinched, little doors and windows, miniature areas, and plaster facings spoke of narrow means and a perpetual struggle to keep up appearances.

A vigorous and repeated use of bell and knocker at the door of one of these desirable family residences finally brought a dingy, unkempt servant girl from the regions below.

Her nationality was plainly stamped on her face. From her ragged "fringe" to her long, thin, aggressive upper lip she was purely Hibernian. Anyone offending her might reckon upon a rendering of "Irish airs" quite unknown to any modern composer.

She admitted her brief sojourn at the "British Lion," but bridled up and became defiant when the box was alluded to.

"Shure and the master tould me I might 'ave it," she retorted. "If it hadn't been good for nothing he wouldn't 'ave made me a present of it, thrust him for that, the tight-fisted spalpeen! Was it himself now that sent ye here inquirin' afther it?"

Apprehensive of violence meditated against the "British Lion" and its landlord by the indignant maiden, Vincent proceeded to explain that he had no wish to dispute her just claim to Sandy MacNab's box.

Sandy having been an acquaintance, as it were, of his, and the box in question having been promised by the old Scotchman either to him or his brother, he was endeavouring to trace it out, and to obtain possession of it as a trifling memento of the departed. Moreover—but the most conclusive argument of all—he was quite willing to give a sovereign in exchange for it.

Vincent felt the excuse coined to account for such an odd errand on the spur of the moment to be an improbable one. But he trusted to that other coin to prevent it from being very closely looked into.

Hibernian became gracious as the wonderful "ready-made" costume that sovereign would enable her to purchase for Sunday wear rose before her eyes in many-coloured splendour.

"Will ye step in, sir, for a minnit?" she said, hesitatingly. "Shure, the missis won't

mind my axin' ye into the parlor while I run upstairs to empty the box and bring it down. Ye won't be for carryin' it away yerself now?" she asked, glancing dubiously at the well-dressed man before her.

Vincent said he would pay a man to transfer the lumbering old property from Church-street to his own residence. The girl had no sooner rushed upstairs to fetch it than the landlady of the house, a faded little piece of gentility who had been listening over the banisters to the colloquy going on below, entered the room and expressed a hope that her servant had not been accused of doing anything wrong.

"Certainly not," said Vincent. "In consenting to give up the box—her own property—she is really granting me a favour. Mine is rather an odd mission, but I have a reason for wishing to obtain the worthless article that I have taken so much trouble to gain."

The box, on being bumped downstairs, proved to be an ordinary wooden one, covered with torn black leather, and studded with brass nails, many of which were missing. The lid, slightly concave in its formation, would easily admit of a flat one being inserted beneath it, leaving a hollow space between.

After paying the girl, seeing the box wheeled off by a man in a barrow—first satisfying himself that the upper part of it had never been interfered with—and promising, in reply to the landlady's request, that he would recommend her apartments to all his friends, Vincent Eyre took leave of Church-street, never to visit it again.

An examination of the box in the quiet of his own room convinced him that no one had suspected the secret of the double lid. After pressing and probing in vain to find the well-concealed spring, he brought chisel and hammer to bear upon it in his impatience.

The rotten wood gave way, and a little cloud of dust enveloped him as he went crashing through the first lid, while a number of mouldy yellow papers, as if tired of their long concealment, came tumbling out.

The doctor sat down on the floor amidst the ruins of the box, and read them from beginning to end.

Silent witnesses, they traced the progress of Percival Massey's daringly-conceived fraud from its commencement to its final issue in the failure of the bank. Sandy's diary, more dangerous still, took up the thread at that point where Massey had first taken him into confidence, and formed a connecting link between the absconding clerk and the great financier, clearly proving how, by degrees, the one had become merged in the other.

Had those papers been discovered by anyone else the story of Percival Massey's dishonest dealing would have been sown broadcast, and the veil of secrecy that poor Gwendoline had thrown over her father's sin, even while attempting to relieve it, would have been rudely thrust aside.

Vincent committed them one and all to the flames. They made quite a little bonfire as they vanished up the chimney in a cloud of sparks, the author of their destruction looking on at his own work with a thoughtful smile.

"They will never cause her any pain or annoyance," he reflected, stirring some smouldering, charred pages up with the poker till they blazed merrily. "Thus vanishes the last written proof of Percival Massey's guilt. To think that I of all men should be destroying them, and for a woman's sake!"

He was not long in ignorance respecting Gwendoline's address.

On going to see Birdie it transpired in the course of conversation. It gratified Vincent to learn that Gwendoline had, during his imprisonment, paid frequent visits to the school, and exercised a wise, kindly surveillance over the pretty, wilful, vivacious girl, in whom he could find out but few traces of the quiet, demure child, during the latter's holidays.

Birdie had become a slim, tall, straight-legged girllette, still in short frocks, with great



glorious dark eyes, a saucy retouched little nose, and long, soft, dark hair, that fell in wavy abundance to her feet, unconfined by any comb or ribbon.

"You dear old uncle, I am glad to see you again!" she exclaimed joyously, as she threw her arms round Vincent's neck. "How could they accuse you of killing poor Uncle Dick? He was far more likely to have killed you had you made him angry. I can't help feeling glad that you were not the victim, because I am so fond of you. I had a dreadful time of it after you were sentenced."

"How was that, Birdie?"

"I was grieving over you for one thing, and the girls were so hasty for another. It was very kind of Miss Primrose to let me remain in the school with such a star upon my name. Just fancy what it must have been for a young lady to have a near relation in prison, and not even as a first-class misdemeanant!"

Vincent laughed; the girlish egotism that prompted Birdie to ignore his far greater sufferings while dwelling upon her own small grievances that had sprung from them amused him considerably.

"I wonder your hair isn't grey, puss!" he remarked, pinching her pretty ear. "You must have had a lot to go through on my account. So the girls objected to my position, did they?"

"Some of them did, but the others tried to comfort me. They said Government might perhaps consent to let you out at the end of about forty-five years. When the news of your honourable release came, Miss Primrose gave us all a holiday, and I provided a nice little banquet out of my own pocket-money—ice-creams and raspberry tarts. You may be sure I didn't invite any of the girls who had snubbed me, and thrown out horrid hints about my relations. They had the pleasure of looking on while the rest of us feasted."

"I'm afraid you've been rather short of pocket-money lately, haven't you, Birdie?"

"No, Gwendoline keeps me well supplied. I always spend my holidays with her. I think she grows nicer than ever. You ought to marry her, Uncle Vincent; that would be delightful! The girls and I have talked it over, and settled everything among ourselves, even to the bridesmaids' dresses!"

"Of course, if you have settled it I have only to obey," said Vincent, gravely. "I suppose it has never occurred to you, Birdie, that Miss Massey might object to being disposed of in such a summary fashion."

"I don't think she would," returned Birdie, mysteriously. "Uncle Vincent, I believe she likes you better than anyone else in the wide world."

"Nonsense, child. You don't know what you are saying."

"I do," cried Birdie, indignantly. "When I stayed with her she frequently alluded to you, and she asked me all sorts of questions about you when we were alone. I have seen the tears standing in her eyes at such times, and she has turned away to hide them from me. You remember the likeness of yourself in my little album, Uncle Vincent?"

"Yes."

"Well, she begged that of me, and gave me a lovely engraving in exchange. I came across the photo one day when I was turning over some things in her room. She had put it away in a drawer where she keeps all her cherished treasures—her father's watch, and a locket containing some of her mother's hair. If that isn't—"

"Birdie, be quiet," interrupted Vincent sternly. "You have no right to abuse Miss Massey's confidence, or to reveal anything you may have heard her say. Your tongue runs away with you. You have placed a wrong interpretation upon some very ordinary trifling incidents, and for the future you must never couple my name with that of Miss Massey, even in jest."

But when he left the school, after augmenting Birdie's stock of pocket-money, and

promising to come again soon, a strange, unreasonable elation filled his heart.

He reproached himself for attaching so much importance to a child's lightly uttered words; and yet, if they contained any germ of truth, would he not be acting foolishly if he left England without seeing Gwendoline Massey again, and putting his fate boldly to the test?

Her seeming coldness and reserve might be only a veil to conceal not indifference, but feelings of a very different nature. At least, he would not allow her to drift from him until he had ascertained, at any cost, what lay behind that veil.

Hope and love alike received a sudden check, however, from an unexpected quarter.

Vincent received a communication from his banker, informing him that a large sum of money had been placed to his credit by someone whose name had not transpired.

The transaction had been effected through the medium of a solicitor, while the money declared to be his by right, in payment of a long-standing debt, amounted to more than the doctor had ever possessed in his life.

Nevertheless, his access of fortune threw him into a rare passion, and destroyed the castles he had been building of late upon the foundation of Gwendoline's love for him.

That she had placed this sum at his disposal there could be no doubt. Could she think so poorly of him, as to imagine him capable of receiving any pecuniary recompense from her in return for what he had done and suffered? Gwendoline herself lost caste in his eyes as he pondered over this action of hers.

If she could not give him all, at least she might have refrained from insulting him with such inadequate remuneration.

"I must see her," was the decision arrived at after a very short cogitation. "She shall learn the value I set upon such a gift before another hour has passed over our heads."

Hurt, wounded, indignant, he sprang into the first hansom he could get, and was whirled rapidly away in the direction of Kensington.

## CHAPTER XL.

Gwendoline, seated at the piano, was weaving dreamy melodies in the pleasant restful twilight when Vincent Eyre entered the pretty drawing-room.

The wood fire—a luxurious whim in which she always indulged when autumn was approaching—flickered and gleamed upon velvet brackets, rare bits of old china, proof engravings, oriental embroidery, and the thousand and one little elegancies that a woman of cultivated taste and artistic instincts gathers around her.

There was just enough of aestheticism in the furnishing of the room to distinguish it from commonplace, featureless apartments without rendering it grotesque and unintelligible to ordinary people.

Gwendoline herself, in sombre trailing draperies, only relieved at the throat by a few starry white flowers, might have been taken for a beautiful personification of night, supreme, radiant, lovely, in the midst of appropriate surroundings, compelling homage and admiration by reason of her unconscious grace, and the subtle, womanly charm she possessed.

She stopped playing, and rose as her visitor came towards her, wondering a little as to the cause of the ominous cloud on his brow.

The hope that had sprung up within her heart on hearing him announced died out as she beheld it.

No one coming on an errand of love would wear such a clouded, angry brow. Of what was he about to accuse her? What had she done to render her deserving of that reproachful look and abrupt, unfriendly greeting?

"I thought you had left England, Dr. Eyre?" she remarked, inquiringly. "I did not know that you were still in town."

"I might leave it for ever without any regret, considering the small amount of happiness, love, or true friendship I have to think of in connection with it," was the bitter reply; then going to the point, regardless of conventionalities, "Miss Massey, it is to you I am indebted for the sum of money now lying in the bank at my disposal. The surmise is my own, yet I know it to be correct."

"Yes," said Gwendoline, with despairing frankness, no longer at a loss to understand his angry mood.

He had taken a wrong view of the restitution she had made in much fear and trembling. If only he had accepted it in silence! And yet in that case a sense of disappointment, of something wanting on the part of the man she loved, would have oppressed her.

She hardly knew whether to feel glad or sorry that he was so hard to satisfy, that her action had aroused his displeasure and brought him to her. What could this anger of his portend?

"You have augmented my income," he continued, "at the expense of wounding every finer feeling and destroying every undefined hope I possessed. I thought you understood me too well to imagine I required to be remunerated for any service rendered to you. To offer it in such a form is an aggravation of the offence. Your business-like, practical computation has swept away the last pleasing illusion in which I ventured to indulge. I am to be paid in coin of the realm, like your tradesmen, for what I have done. I wonder you do not demand a receipt—it would be strictly in keeping with the rest. Curse the money! If it lies there for fifty years I shall not touch a penny of it. My object in coming here to-day is to return your gift, and to give you some idea of the pain it has caused me."

He flung himself into a chair, tears forcing their way into his eyes sorely against his will.

Gwendoline had never seen a man moved to such an extent before. In spite of her gentle, sympathetic nature, she felt rather exultant than otherwise, not in the least frightened or indignant. Guilty and detected she did not even regret the line she had adopted in sending the money to Vincent.

Had he ceased to love her, she reflected, swiftly, he would either have accepted the money or returned it without any strong ebullition of feeling.

"You have entirely mistaken my motives," she replied, seating herself by the fire opposite to him, and shielding her fair face from the blaze with a great feathery fan. "Do you remember what I told you that day in the cemetery—that my debt to you would never be paid? In condoning my father's crime, regardless of its magnitude, the wealth of which it deprived you and yours, and the mournful consequences it entailed, you made me for ever your debtor, and as such I am willing to remain. The pride is on your side, not mine. In refunding the money of which my father defrauded yours I have done a simple act of restitution, in no wise bearing upon subsequent events. I look upon it as a continuation of the duty imposed on me by the dead, and which I am still striving to fulfil."

"You have an excellent way of putting things," said Vincent, with the ghost of a scornful smile flickering round his lips. "You could almost make a man believe that black was white, Miss Massey, if you tried. Even to please you I cannot allow myself to be thus gracefully blinded. That old affair of the bank fraud was fully righted when, through your agency, the victims were recompensed, and my father's fair dealing and integrity were amply vindicated. The debt owing to me is a fictitious item that I must disavow."

"But you would have been wealthy had the bank prospered instead of failing," persisted Gwendoline, rather angrily. "You are very

one-sided in some of your arguments, Dr. Eyre. Your parent may have justice done to him, but you will not allow me to atone for the sin committed by mine."

"You have done more than enough already," said Vincent, rising to go, "and I refuse to accept this money upon any pretence whatever. Had you been free and heart-whole I might have asked for a very different reward, one that I could have accepted gladly and thankfully. Circumstances being as they are, however, it only remains for us, now that we have arrived at a better understanding with each other, to say good-bye."

"You would seem to be well acquainted with my sentiments," said Gwendoline, rising also, her lovely face white and rigid. "May I ask you to clothe your meaning in yet plainer words? I may not have followed you rightly in what you have just said."

"Have I not heard the story of the love that fills your heart from your own lips, rendering other appeals worse than useless? The breaking-off of an engagement does not necessarily imply the cessation of love. Men and women cannot love to order, and, knowing this, I do not blame you for being unable to transfer your affection. Only refrain from offering me anything less; that I neither can nor will forgive."

"Stay!" cried Gwendoline, with quivering lips and forced composure. "You may ascribe wrong motives to my actions, but at least you shall listen while I do justice to myself in one respect. Your assumption is wholly without foundation. You wrong me when you declare that I am wedded to the memory of a faithless man. No love could survive the ordeal through which I have passed. Tricked, deceived, cheated, it died a lingering death, and indifference took its vacant place in my heart. Such a contemptible being was unworthy even of hatred. He is no more to me at the present moment than any stranger I pass in the street. I have forgiven, and, to a certain extent, forgotten him, although I wish he had not cost me so dear. This explanation I owed to myself. I could not allow you to depart under such a false impression. Your visit has had the effect of making a lonely, unhappy woman feel her position more keenly than ever; your reproaches have added to the sense of regret that never leaves me. As you remarked just now it only remains for us to say good-bye."

Vincent failed to take the hint. Light was breaking in upon him very fast indeed. The anger born of jealous love melted away beneath its genial influence. Birdie's childish words recurred to his mind like white-winged messengers of hope.

Instead of going away he went to where Gwendoline was sitting and knelt beside her, his strong face aglow with the conflicting emotions that possessed him.

"Gwendoline, we have reached a turning point in our lives," he said, solemnly. "Do not let pride, anger, or any other false guide induce us to take the wrong path. If I have been harsh or unjust towards you, forgive me! It is my great love that renders me so exacting in my demands, so fearful of receiving anything that falls short of my expectations. Tell me, as truthfully as if you were on your oath, were I for the second time to ask you to become my wife, would any other motive than gratitude influence you in saying 'yes'?"

"Oh! what a poor opinion you have of me!" she replied, turning from him, half in wounded feeling, half in sudden joy.

"Why?"

"To think that I should be unprincipled enough to give you base alloy in return for gold, to palm gratitude upon you when you ask for love. I would far sooner inflict the pain of a direct refusal. You foolish fellow! Should I have called you back and corrected a wrong impression, had I nothing better than the gratitude you so much dread to bestow upon you?"

In the bewilderment of his joy Vincent's

arms closed around his long-sought, newly-found treasure.

His kisses fell like rain upon the sweet face nestled against his own, and the sense of proud possession grew apace, mingled with one of profound thankfulness.

"After many days, my darling!" he whispered, softly. "How the knowledge of your love would have cheered and consoled me during my experience of prison life. But that lies in the past, and as sunlight succeeds storm, so this, the crowning joy of existence, has been kept in reserve for me until now."

"Vincent!"

"Yes."

"I doubted you once, even as you have doubted me. I had been so cruelly deceived that my faith in human nature—especially male nature—was shattered. When you were growing dear to me I would have given the world to know if the love I had rejected was really pure and disinterested. I could not forget the hateful fact of my heiress-ship, and I wondered if yours were a blending of love and Mammon. Are you angry with me for this?"

"Not in the least; I know what self-torture means."

"When my father brought my doubts to an end by telling me of all that you had absolved him from for my sake, I was selfish enough to lose sight of his disgrace and your misery for a moment in the joy of learning that one man had loved me not wisely, but too well. For years the fact of your love has upheld and strengthened me. Without it I could hardly have borne the loneliness and the sorrow."

"And I deemed you cold and reserved when we met for the first time after my release!" exclaimed Vincent, penitentially. "How could I have been such a blind fool?"

"I could hardly rush into your arms, or make the first advances!" said she, with a smile. "I went there, hoping to meet you. When you came the result was disappointing. I fancied from your manner that I was no longer an object of superlative interest to you, that you were angry with me for costing you so much. I went away sad and depressed, resolving to build no more castles in the air while I lived!"

"My love had made me morbid!" rejoined Vincent. "I feared to press my suit, lest that fiend gratitude should alone urge you to consent. That fear removed, I can breathe freely, Gwennie. Although a stormy scene preceded our engagement, I am not inclined to accept it as a bad omen for the future; some storms clear the air, and indicate a return of fine weather."

She did not seem to dread the future much. She only nestled a little closer to him, and began to speak of the past.

Simply and frankly she acquainted Vincent with the history of Arthur Joscellyn's double dealing, and the remarkable *dénouement* to which it had led.

"I have kept nothing from you," she said, in conclusion.

"And that girl—Miss Dare—could marry him eventually," remarked Vincent, with an amused smile. "Perhaps she thought it was the worst punishment she could inflict upon him."

"No, she is rather a nice girl in her way," said Gwendoline, charitably. "She actually wrote to me previous to her marriage excusing herself for taking him into favour again after openly denouncing him."

"Did you reply?"

"Yes, to the effect that she was quite welcome to marry him so far as I was concerned. As an earnest of my sincerity and goodwill I sent her a little wedding present, and there the matter ended."

Vincent Eyre was still in the drawing-room when Miss Banks returned from her solitary walk. As an excuse for prolonging his call he pleaded for some music.

"What shall I sing?" asked Gwendoline, going to the piano.

"Sing that," he said, pulling out a favourite

drawing-room song from a heap of music, "I heard it sung the other night by a professional. It was while listening to her the thought occurred to me how gloriously you would render the simple melody, without those ear-piercing shakes and quivers."

"Oh, 'Wild Rose!' It is rather nice, and it keeps within the compass of my voice."

She sang it with taste and feeling, her voice sinking low in the last verse—an impassioned appeal from a lover to the rose-maiden he was wooing.

"Fain would I shield thee from each storm,  
Each rudely beating shower,  
And wear thee ever on my breast,  
Thou fragile lovely flower!  
Sunbeam and gentle breeze alone  
Thy beauty should renew,  
While in return thy fragrance sweet  
Should thrill my whole life through."

"I have gathered my queen rose," said Vincent, bending over her, "and like her namesake she will fill my life with gladness."

"You are not afraid of the thorns?" inquired Gwendoline, mischievously.

"Not in the least. So fair a blossom is worth the winning. What matter scratched hands when once the prize is secured? And I fancy the worst of the thorns are already stripped off never to wound again."

## CHAPTER XLI.

MONACO in the height of the season. Yachts flying the colours of the R.Y.S. sail proudly into the little haven between Monaco and Monte Carlo, dropping their white sails gracefully as they enter it; well-dressed visitors throng the gardens of the Casino, or try their luck with more or less success at the tables. Glorious weather tends to increase the universal gaiety.

The pleasure-seekers are doing their best to wreathe old Time's sharp scythe in fragrant dew-drenched blossoms that they may not hear him mowing down the pleasant golden hours.

There has been an exciting run of thirteen upon the red, and every one is talking about it. Such grim, disagreeable subjects as ruin and suicide are put in the background. They do not harmonise well with the blue sky, the radiant sunlight, and the cheery strains of a fine band.

A lady and gentleman who seem in no hurry to enter the Casino are walking up and down the terrace shaded by orange trees listening to the band.

Curious glances are occasionally directed towards them, and they elicit more than one remark from passers-by.

The man is tall, with a square strong face and form, dark blue eyes, and crisp dark hair; his companion's fair delicate loveliness and purity of outline single her out for special notice among the many pretty women present.

"What an ugly man!" exclaims a French damsel, whose ideal of manly beauty is centred in small features, slim waists, and waxen complexions.

"Yes but it is ugliness that attracts instead of repelling, and not unfrequently wins lasting love," replies her wiser companion. "For such a man some women would be willing sacrifice everything."

"Nonsense, my dear, it is a clear case of beauty and the beast," retorts Belle France, sticking womanfully to her own opinion.

"But beauty did love the beast, according to the old nursery tale, so your argument won't hold water," is the laughing reply. "I daresay they are devoted to each other."

"There goes Eyre," said an officer to his wife, "the man that all the row was about a little while ago."

"Not the Eyre who was accused of murdering his brother, and who actually underwent imprisonment?" said that lady, gazing incredulously in the direction indicated.

"The same. He married the only daughter



of Massey, the financier, not long after his release, upon the confession of the real murderer. Don't you remember what a fuss the papers kicked up about it?"

"Yes. What a very pretty woman his wife is! I wonder if they were engaged previous to his conviction?"

"Don't know, should almost fancy they were. It must have been a love-match, for Eyre has nothing beyond what his profession brings him in. Lucky dog, after all, to secure such a wife. Beautiful heiresses as a rule are only to be met with in three-volume novels."

"Vincent, is it my fancy, or are those people really noticing and discussing us?" says Gwendoline, breaking off in the midst of an interesting conversation with her husband. "We seem to be exciting general attention and remark."

"All your fault for dressing so exquisitely and looking so lovely," he replies. "I daresay they are drawing mental comparisons between us, and thinking, if not saying, what an ill-matched pair we are."

"Don't be foolish, sir. The interest evinced is doubtless confined entirely to you. The circumstances connected with your trial and release are still fresh in people's minds, while the photographers have made all the world acquainted with your personal appearance."

"Does this unenviable notoriety of mine annoy you, Gwennie?"

"Not in the least, if you do not mind it," she answers brightly, tightening her hold upon his arm as she speaks. "It will soon wear off, and you will be dropped to admit of some fresh sensation being taken up. I am too happy to dwell upon such trifles, Vincent. When are you going to take me in? I am dying to gamble."

"I am not at all sure that I shall allow you to gamble, madam. You may develop a mania for it and leave the tables a pauper."

"Or I may break the bank. What a delightful stroke of fortune that would be!"

"Either way you won't be able to indulge your gambling propensities long. We must be getting back to England next week to release poor old Clarke, and give him the chance of a holiday while the fine weather lasts. It was very good of him to take all the patients and start us off, Gwennie, as he did for a month. I think we have enjoyed our holiday, little wife?"

"It has been without a cloud," says Gwennie. "I shall always look back upon it with delight. The very fact of knowing it to be limited has somehow added to the pleasure of it. We have had to compress so much sight-seeing into such a limited space of time, and to make each moment yield its full meed of enjoyment. Now—"

"By Jove, Gwennie, who are those people coming along the terrace towards us?" exclaimed Vincent, as he catches sight of a languid, fair-haired handsome man, and a little dark-eyed lady, becomingly attired in a daring combination of black and maize, that sets off her brunette beauty to the best advantage.

"Mr. Joscelynn and his wife," says Gwendoline, placidly. "How odd that they should be staying here also! This will be our first meeting since our respective marriages."

There is no tremor in her voice, and her clear blue eyes meet her husband's searching glance without flinching.

Did a vestige of her former love remain she would not be able to bear herself thus calmly under such circumstance, she reflects, with a feeling of profound thankfulness.

"We may as well be civil to them," he remarks inquiringly, "and determine the ground upon which we are to meet in society for the future."

"Certainly," replies his wife, with the graceful dignity that never forsakes her. "Why should we be otherwise than civil to them? Have we not decided to ignore the past, with all its follies and mistakes?"

The unexpected encounter embarrasses the Joscelyns far more than the Eyres. The

former are at a loss to know how they will be received, or what attitude they are expected to adopt.

Arthur Joscelynn, recalling the base, unprincipled conduct of which he has been guilty towards the beautiful woman whom he is about to meet, flushes hotly, and wishes vainly that his yacht had wafted him in any other direction.

Even Ethel's self-possession fails her in such an emergency, and she cannot think of any social tactics that will enable her to glide gracefully out of an awkward position.

Vincent Eyre, not unmindful of that friendly visit paid to him by Arthur Joscelynn in a time of great trouble, takes the initiative by holding out his hand as they meet. Gwendoline follows his example, as if it were a mere matter of course, and forgiveness is thus tacitly bestowed upon the offending party.

The cue thus given relieves Joscelynn and his wife from their embarrassment, and shows them how to act.

They stand upon the terrace for awhile, a friendly quartette, discussing the weather, the play, and other topics of general conversation, carefully avoiding even the most distant allusion to the past.

"Have you been here long?" inquired Vincent of Mrs. Joscelynn, whose points he is mentally appraising. Hitherto he has had only Gwendoline's description of her former rival to go by.

"Hardly a week," says Ethel, glancing rather sharply at her husband. "I want to persuade Arthur to go away before he loses any more money. He is frightfully unlucky, and he will persist in playing."

The persuasion was evidently a mere figure of speech. When Ethel intended him to go Joscelynn would have to obey marital orders.

"My luck may turn yet," he chimes in, with a nervous laugh, "and I don't venture much at a time. You are about to try yours?" turning to Gwendoline. "I hope you may prove more successful."

When they part each feels relieved to know that the ice has been broken, and the first interview got through in a satisfactory manner.

Friends under the circumstances they can never become, but, as ordinary acquaintances, they will frequently meet without any unpleasant feature in their mutual intercourse.

"She is a clever, capable, little woman," says Vincent as he wends his way to the Casino, "just the quick-tempered, energetic, imperious, better-half to stir up a lazy man like Joscelynn, and keep him in order when he is likely to go wrong."

"So I should imagine," Gwendoline responds readily. "It cannot be pleasant though to have a husband who requires keeping in order. I should soon lose all respect for him myself. Oh, Vincent, how the crucible of Providence can change a seeming cross into a crown of richest happiness! Had I been permitted to have my own way, to marry Arthur Joscelynn, what would my life have been like as I slowly awoke to the awful knowledge of his weakness, his want of principle, and the spurious nature of his love?"

"Glancing over the past I fancy we have neither of us much to regret, my darling. Even our sufferings have borne good fruit."

"There is but one thing I regret," says Gwendoline, gently.

"And that is—?"

"That I ever caused you a moment's pain or disappointment on Arthur Joscelynn's account."

"Never mind. He played for high stakes and lost when he sought to win you, Gwennie, however much he may restrict his ventures now. I won the woman apart from the heiress. On the strength of my victory I can forgive him all the rest."

As they ascend the steps of the Casino the flower-women who stand there press their fragrant wares upon Gwendoline, and entreat her to purchase. She buys freely of them, and her hands are filled with roses of every hue,

from cream to damask, when she enters the crowded saloon.

They do not remain very long in it. The hungry, anxious faces of the gamblers, and the close air are not much to their liking.

The wedded lovers emerge again into the sunlight and the balmy atmosphere, Vincent ironically congratulating his wife upon her winnings, which are not large.

"And some people fancied they could break the 'bank,'" he insinuates, teasingly. "How are the mighty fallen!"

"At least I have not lost anything," she replies undauntedly, "while I have won enough to buy that enormous pipe with the carved bowl that we saw in the bric-a-brac shop this morning for Doctor Clarke, and a piece of old china for myself as a memento of the most delightful holiday ever spent."

"Clarke will be in raptures over the pipe!" says Vincent. "It will be a kind of white elephant in his collection."

"He is one of my favourites," says Gwendoline, without the least fear of rousing her husband's jealousy. "I always feel grateful to him for remaining faithful to you, Vincent, in your great trouble, and taking you into partnership upon your being released."

They go off in the direction of the bric-a-brac shop to spend their winnings, gleeful as any boy and girl.

Supremely happy in the present, the future seems as far off to them as the fleecy cloudlets sailing overhead. Yet when the future shall have become the present—when Vincent Eyre's latent and steady application and research shall have raised him to the head of his profession, and conferred a title upon him—when the beautiful Lady Eyre shall reign as a society queen, winning all hearts—not even then shall they taste a purer, sweeter happiness than now, when their mutual love and joy stand out bright, clear, serene, against the dark background of recent sorrow and affliction.

[THE END.]

## HAD WE NEVER LOVED SO BLINDLY.

—10:—

### CHAPTER XXXI.

"You must take my arm," said Nesta Rivers, with a pretty air of protecting tenderness to Eustace Trevanion; "and you may lean on it as much as you like."

"I shall crush all your finery," looking down at the lace sleeve with its delicate trimmings. "Really your get-up is awfully jolly. It does credit to Flo's taste!"

"Yes; don't the Miss Willoughbys look nice?" blushing, as she met his fervent glance of admiration, "Jenny especially."

"Yes, looks well for her, but not half as nice as somebody else," he added, rather vaguely. This was the first time that he was to take his place at table since the accident. At the Abbey he had been promoted from his bed to a sofa, which was latterly wheeled at dinner-time into the octagon-room; but to-day he had insisted upon sitting at the wedding-breakfast like anybody else.

His thin, aristocratic face looked very delicate, but there was a flush upon his cheeks, a feverish light in his eyes; and Flora, in spite of her many preoccupations, cast anxious glances in his direction.

She looked very lovely, with all her white laces falling about her, and the diamonds which Sir Basil had given her gleaming in her hair; and Philip Fane, gazing at her with covetous eyes, could scarcely contain the passionate rage which possessed his heart. Basil had won the prize, but he was not safe yet. A marriage, however firmly tied by a dignity of the church, can yet be undone by death or divorce.

The latter seemed the most unlikely of the

two; but, to Philip's evil mind, not beyond the bounds of possibility. As he sat beside a Miss Fane, cousin of the bridegroom's, and, in default of any near relation of the bride's, lead bridesmaid, he was only a short distance from Sir Basil.

With savage discontent he saw how all the harsher lines of his face had softened; how his dark eyes, usually so stern, beamed with happiness, how five years at least seemed to be taken off his age. He had won all along the line!

And then Philip leant back in his chair and reflected. With care and cunning and patience he had an idea that he could turn all this prosperity into abject misery.

He saw his cousin watched, suspected and hunted down; he saw him driven from the arms of his young wife, turned out of his splendid home at Greylands, dragged to prison, and the dock! And then he, Philip Fane, would appear as the good genius; he would get poison conveyed to this cousin that he might end life with a certain amount of decency, and not on the gallows.

And thus, having saved the family name from a disgrace that would live through the ages, he would seek out the lovely widow, and drawing her to his breast tell her that one Fane had brought her disgrace and dishonour, but another would bring her honour and happiness.

His heart swelled as he imagined the scene, her sweet eyes raised to his in wonder and doubt, his voice vibrating in passionate pleading. He could picture it all so plainly, and he was troubled by no pity for the suicide, no regret for his ruined life; both were merged in the satisfaction at finding himself master of Greylands, and the possible husband of the girl he dared to love.

He woke up from his dream with a start, to find Flora smiling into her husband's face, Sir Basil looking down at her with the new pride of possession, Eustace making love to Nesta Rivers under her mother's nose, Emily and Jane flirting with their respective cavaliers, and a general buzz of conversation going on, interrupted by bursts of happy laughter, and the popping of champagne-corks.

He felt like a ghost present at a cheerful banquet; but Sir Basil's eye was upon him, and he knew that it was necessary for him to rouse himself.

"The Willoughbys have really decorated the room very prettily," said Miss Fane, patronisingly. "Do you know anything of those people?"

"I should like to know a good deal more," answered Philip, who disapproved of superciliousness in anyone but himself; "the girls are not half bad, and the father's a good sort of fellow."

"You've known the bride, I suppose? She would really be pretty if she had a more decided colour."

"Too much decision in anything spoils a woman."

"Sir Basil seems to appreciate her?" with a little laugh.

"Yes, and the Queen approves of the Koh-i-noor."

"What do you mean by that?" eyeing him with some curiosity.

"I mean that perfection is always appreciated except by fools."

"And Lady Fane is perfection?" with a small cough.

"Yes, one woman amongst a thousand—that's the general opinion. I'm no judge."

"You seem to have studied the subject!"

"I seem to have eyes in my head, that's all," with a laugh that had more bitterness than joy.

"I believe Sir Basil cut you out?" she said, impressively, as if she had made a great discovery.

"You are mistaken. Matrimony is a luxury in which I can't indulge. So sorry, Amelia. You wouldn't thank me for throwing a pauper at your feet?"

"There was no question of myself," laughing and blushing.

"No question asked; but it might have been thought of," talking nonsense, in order to seem properly festive, whilst he stretched his ears to listen to what Sir Basil was saying to Lady Rivers about his movements.

"Going to Paris? But that will be a desert now. Why not try further south? Have you ever been to Nice?"

"We have no time. We must be back for Eustace's sake," and the husband and wife exchanged a look which was gall and wormwood to the jealous eyes that watched.

Philip Fane leant forward and said, in a careless tone,—

"Ever been to Monte Carlo?"

Flora felt as if a dagger had gone through her heart, for she remembered that this was the question which Philip had wanted her to ask in order to see what effect it would produce.

She dared not look at her husband, but looked defiantly at Philip, who for once did not return her glance; for his eyes were fixed on his cousin.

There was a sudden flinching in Sir Basil's face, a quiver that was almost imperceptible; but if he felt anything he recovered himself immediately, and looking Philip straight in the face, he said, with a certain amount of haughtiness,—

"I should not care to take my wife to a haunt of gamblers."

Philip smiled, as he leant back.

"Did you notice anything?" turning to Miss Fane.

"Only that Basil looked unnecessarily fierce."

"You did not remark the two evasions: 'Had he been to Nice? There was no time to go there.' 'Had he been to Monte Carlo? He would not take his wife to a haunt of gamblers.' Now why couldn't he give a straightforward answer to both?" and Philip Fane looked as virtuously shocked as if it had never been his constant habit to evade the truth on all occasions, and to tell it only by accident.

"You must excuse a man for being rather *égari* on his wedding-day," with a smile.

"Not a bit of it. He was startled, but he was all there. You won't catch Basil napping."

"But it is an old-fashioned idea to be ashamed of going to Monte Carlo—he could have no motive."

"You forget what happened there," with a significant glance.

"Ah! poor Sir Lucius? But, do you know, I could enjoy myself very well, notwithstanding?"

"He was a stranger to you. Perhaps you never saw him. Basil knows more about him than anyone else. There was some story about him and Mabel Fane. I think she thought herself married to him, and woke up one day to find it a mistake."

"Married to Basil!" in an awe-struck voice, and with wideopen eyes.

"No, no; married to the other man. She was Basil's own sister."

"No wonder he looks so stern."

"She died, so he needn't look stern about her still."

"But that is a sort of thing one couldn't forget. Poor fellow! What a wretch Sir Lucius was!" her young heart full of genuine indignation.

"Poor Sir Lucius, rather. He was enjoying life to the full; money to spend on every whim, no conscience to trouble him, a stone for a heart, and a digestion that was never out of order. What more could a man want? And then in steps Nemesis, and with a most unnecessary bullet sends him to 'kingdom come.'"

"It was a just retribution. I haven't a doubt that remorse drove him to it, and he killed himself."

"There wasn't a grain of remorse in his composition. If he had murdered the girl I

don't suppose he would have slept one whit the worse for it."

"Horrible!" with a shudder. "Why rake up such a dreadful story to-day?"

"Because Basil reminded me of it. Do you suppose he ever forgets it? Mabel was the apple of his eye, the loveliest girl that ever stepped, and it was awkward for her."

"But how did it happen? She could not think herself married, unless she really was. Do tell me!"

"Hush! the bride's health. I'll drink that in a bumper," standing up. "Long life and happiness, and (aside) may she be mine before my life is done!"

Nesta Rivers drank the toast, whilst her thoughts flew far away to India, where this day would be as a day of desolation to her brother through all the coming years, and her kindly heart grew sad.

"I must have that flower, please," whispered Eustace; "this has been the best day of my life," and he took a white rose from her fingers, which had fallen out of her bouquet.

"I hope you'll have a better," thinking that he was losing the sister whom he loved so much.

"If you hope it, perhaps I may."

"Oh! I shan't have anything to do with it," blushing rosy red.

"Listen, Miss Rivers," sinking his voice. "Do you know there is some hope that I mayn't be a cripple after all?"

"I am so glad," lifting a pair of earnest blue eyes to his face, in which tears of sympathy were gathering.

"And then, if I'm no longer halt and maimed, you won't snub me?"

"I don't think that I ever did," her lashes drooping.

"If you did—if I thought you would—I shouldn't's care to be cured."

"Oh, Mr. Trevanion, how can you say so!"

And then there was a general move, and the bride hurried out of the room to put on her travelling dress, whilst Nesta followed her with a fluttering heart, and Philip's eyes went after her to the door, with a passionate longing in them which he could scarcely repress. Thus amidst hopes, and fears, and wild regrets, Flora Fane embarked on the wide ocean of matrimony.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

WAS it a dream? The last kisses were over, Mrs. Willoughby had cried over her as if she were really very sorry to lose her; the girls had sobbed as they embraced her, and said, "they would miss her awfully." And Eustace himself had put her into the carriage—very pale—without a word, but with a suspicious tremble about his lips, and a convulsive grip of his hand. White shoes—down at the heel and worn out at the toes—were thrown after them, and clouds of rice—the white grains lodging in the bundle of rugs, in the straps of the new portmanteau, and in every crevice where they could find a resting place—ready to betray to every one who passed by, as they alighted at Hardehester, that this was a bride and bridegroom off for their honeymoon.

Sir Basil did not say much on the way; the villagers were all standing at their gates, expecting bows and smiles; the tenant-farmers had formed themselves into a voluntary guard of honour; time for reflection there was none. At the station the cavalcade took off their hats and cheered, astonishing the townspeople who stopped to gaze and stare; and Sir Basil, after cordial thanks, hurried Flora into a train, with an Englishman's natural horror of a fuss. The sound of the cheering pursued them on to the platform, and then there was a loud clatter of horses' hoofs as the train moved out of the station.

"Thank Heaven, that's over," he said, with a fervent sigh as he threw a heap of society and other papers on the seat.

"It was very good of them to take the trouble," said Flora softly.



"Yes, but they might have had more sense. I wonder Mitchell gave into it; as if I wanted you to be stared at by all the gaping idiots of the place."

"It was you they were looking at. It was you they came for."

"Yes of course. I'm worth looking at, am I not?"

She looked up at him shyly; he had taken off his frock coat and put on an ordinary suit of brown diction, and the colour seemed to accord very well with his handsome bronzed face. To his young bride he was better, nobler-looking than any other man on earth. He met the admiration in her eyes, and his face softened at once to wondrous tenderness. Without a word he stretched out his arms, and drew her towards him. There was no resistance; she was his now, his very own. He thought of that, as he bent over that lovely face, and blessed her lips. His heart was in a flutter, his cheeks dyed his cheeks, but she rested in his arms with happy confidence, feeling there was her harbour of refuge where she could find shelter for herself and her brother from every storm. For Eustace's sake, she had given herself to him in the first overwhelming sense of embarrassment and hesitation, but now her whole heart went out to him on a wave of tenderness, and she felt all doubt was over; her best dreams were realized, her highest hopes had found fruition.

"You trust me, little one?"

"Now and always."

"You will never let Philip or any other man come between us?"

"Never! I hate him."

Sir Basil smiled, but his face was terribly earnest.

"He will try to make you doubt me—"

"But he won't succeed. And if he tries again I'll ask you to forbid him the house."

"Then he has begun already?" his eyes darkening.

"Yes, but I wouldn't listen to him. Don't be afraid; it won't make any difference. Oh! Basil," lifting up her face, and looking at him with impassioned eyes. "I trust you, as I trust Heaven!"

He drew a deep breath.

"Child, if you ever change, may Heaven in mercy let me die!"

"But I shan't change," annoyed at his persistency. "The Abbey will fall down before I do."

"I am thankful to think the walls are thick—nearly three feet thick in some parts."

"You will learn some day when you know me better," with a slight assumption of dignity, "that they are not stronger than a woman's faith."

"It will be the joy of my life to learn it," he answered gravely, whilst his anxious heart felt at rest.

For the brief space of his honeymoon he put aside his own troubles, cast dull care behind him, and allowed himself to be happy. His youth had been blighted and nipped, but now it seemed to break into new life, and he threw himself into every pleasure with an abandon that delighted and surprised his young wife. Sometimes, when she had time for thought, which was not very often, she could scarcely believe he was the same man who had lain on the grass, half mad with secret trouble, and prayed her to hate him as the only chance of happiness for them both. What the reason was she could not guess; but it must have had some connection with Philip's insinuations. Perhaps Sir Basil had been under a false impression, and found out his mistake on the day that he made his offer. It was clear that the reason no longer existed, for he was the soul of honour, and would not have married, her if there had been the slightest "cause or impediment" against it. Therefore she put away all idle speculations concerning it, and gave herself up to the happiness of the hour. The fashionable world was absent from Paris, but the streets seemed very bright to Flora's unsophisticated ideas; and lounging by her

husband's side, in an elegant *coupé*, she was the cynosure of every dandy's eye, when she drove in the Bois de Boulogne.

There were one or two grand ladies still left, who had known Sir Basil Fane when a bachelor, and were glad to take notice of his lovely English bride. They asked her to their houses, and took her to their private boxes at the theatre, proud to have such an attraction when the rest of society were feeling dull.

Any girl's head might have been turned by the amount of admiration that Flora received, but she was only amused at the impassioned glances of ardent young Counts, and kept them quietly from going too far by a charming assumption of youthful dignity, and a smile that was sweet enough to heal every wound.

Sir Basil was not inclined to be jealous, for it was to him she turned with a sigh of relief when wearied with parrying constant pretty speeches, and she clung to his arm on leaving a reception in preference to those who were offered by her eager admirers.

There were quiet, happy days when they slipped away from their friends, and made expeditions to the historical haunts in the neighbourhood—places which Flora had often pictured to herself in the school-room at home, and wondered when she should see them with her own eyes. Wherever they went her husband had something to say out of his well-stored mind, but he did not bring it out like sentences from a guide-book, or as if he were giving instructions to a pupil. He would ask her if she remembered such and such an incident connected with the palace or the hunting lodge, or the pleasure ground, which they happened to be inspecting; and then he would conjure up the whole scene with a few simple words, till Flora could see it like a picture.

Every day she grew to love him better, as she learnt the beauty of his character. He was unselfish in the small things of life as well as the great, generous and open-handed, yet not foolishly extravagant; exceedingly pitiful to those who were trampled under foot in the race of life, but stern and unbending to the trampler. His temper was never upset by a trifle. If Flora kept him waiting for dinner she was never met by a cloud on his brow, only by a laughing remonstrance, and if she wanted to go to church when he had planned a drive he yielded at once, and said he would never come between her and her religion.

Even a dunning letter from his cousin did not ruffle his equanimity. Philip complained that he was afraid of stirring from his chambers for fear of being served with a writ.

"How dreadful!" said Flora, to whom there was something quite tragic in the position. "What can you do for him?"

"Send him a cheque—that's all he wants."

"And why is he so terribly poor?" her face full of sympathy, though the object to be pitied was not approved of.

"He has a fair income, but he won't take the trouble to make two ends meet. Perhaps he would be careful if I weren't always standing in the background. For every sovereign he takes out of his own pocket he remembers there are two in mine, and he doesn't forget to claim them when the bill comes in."

"It is a good thing to be rich!" with an air of reflection.

"Yes, but I never remembered to be grateful till just lately. I shouldn't have cared to bring you to Paris if I couldn't give you any little thing you fancied, or take you where you wanted to go."

"But I should have liked it just as well. That diamond swallow from the Rue de la Paix—it is very lovely, but I don't think it made me happier."

"I liked to see it in your hair, and so did the Count. Didn't he wish to borrow its wings and fly after you when you left?"

Flora laughed, amused at the recollection. "He was very silly. When do you think we shall leave?" her face growing grave.

A shadow crossed his.

"So you are tired of it already?"

"Not a bit," eagerly. "I should never be tired of it, but Eustace isn't well."

"Anything serious?"

"He couldn't sleep, and Mrs. Willoughby says the pain in his side is worse."

"We will start to-morrow if you like."

"There's the dinner at the De Neuville's. Let us say the day after," knowing that he expected to meet some old friends, and that he had been looking forward to it with pleasure.

"Just as you like. We can send round to-day and say we are off."

"No, Madame de Neuville would never forgive us."

Sir Basil remonstrated, but Flora was firm. She had wisely resolved that Eustace Trevanion should never be an obstacle in the way of her husband's wishes; and she stuck to her resolution bravely, though sorely tempted to break it.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

ACROSS there was a triumphal arch over the park-gates, and this time there was nothing to mar its effect. Mr. Mitchell with his own hands had torn down the offensive placard, which everyone else had been afraid to touch; and the ghosts of murder and retribution were no longer allowed to hang about the bridegroom on his return from his honeymoon. When he saw the grey pillar without that hideous yellow paper he began to believe that a new life was really dawning for him. The ghosts of that troubled past had come back to him as soon as they reached Hardchester, and Flora's watchful eyes had noticed the shadow on his face, the sudden flapping of his spirits. Her little hand stole into his, and he smiled upon her, but the smile had lost its brightness. Some of it returned now, as he waved his hand to his tenants, and recognised here and there the face of a woman to whose tale of distress he had turned a kindly ear.

It was good to come home, with a beloved wife by his side, and to meet a smile of welcome from every face on the road. Mrs. Madden was on the doorstep, making her best curtsy, but Flora's eyes looked beyond her in vain for a slighter, taller figure with a face that had always been the sunshine of her life, at the top of it.

"No my lady. Master Eustace he couldn't come. They said it was better that he should wait till he was stronger. How well your ladyship is looking, to be sure!" looking up at the sweet face, framed in a Parisian bonnet, with admiring eyes. "Ah, one can see that Sir Basil—bless his heart!—has known how to take care of you."

Flora pressed her hand, and nodded pleasantly to the servants, who were drawn up on either side of the hall. She hoped they were all well, in her fresh young voice, but Sir Basil noticed that there was a ring of sadness in it, which he accounted for by Eustace's absence. It was a strange feeling to come back to the Abbey of Greylands, and know that she was no longer a guest, but its mistress. Perhaps she was oppressed by the idea, as she walked into the grand drawing-room with all its glass and gilding, with its far-famed painted panels, and the little nick-nacks which had cost half a fortune.

"Darling, aren't you satisfied?" as he heard a sigh.

"Oh yes, only it seems much too good for me, and Eustace isn't here, after all, and even Mr. Willoughby has failed."

"Listen!" as a burst of cheering came from the lawn, where ale was being consumed in large quantities. "I don't think you can complain of your welcome. It was very wise of them to keep Eustace from all this unnecessary excitement. Remember, we want him to be in the prime condition when we take him to London."

"Yes, I know. I don't complain, only I was longing to see him."



[WITH CARE, CUNNING, AND PATIENCE PHILIP REFLECTED THAT HE COULD TURN ALL THIS PROSPERITY INTO ABJECT MISERY.]

"We will have the brougham out and drive over there after dinner if you like."

"Oh, thank you so much; that will be delightful, and we can take all our little presents with us," her heart swelling with gratitude, as she asked herself if anyone ever had such a husband as hers, always ready to gratify his wife's every whim.

The next moment the door was thrown open, and in came Mr. Willoughby followed by Philip Fane.

"Jove! you gave us the slip," cried Philip. "There we were both waiting for you at Hardchester, and might have been there till to-morrow if old Symonds hadn't come up to us with some remark about the beauty of the bride."

"So you see, we didn't mean to treat you badly after all," and Mr. Willoughby, having kissed her affectionately on both cheeks, held Flora at arm's length in order to inspect her. "Pon my word, you do Sir Basil credit."

Flora looked so lovely as she laughed and blushed that Philip felt half wild.

"Let me have a chance," he said, gruffly; and as the solicitor reluctantly turned away, he took Flora's hand in both his own, devouring her with his eyes.

She shrank from their insolent admiration, and as her lashes drooped he murmured something about cousinly rights, and put his passionate lips to her cheek.

She started back indignantly, and Sir Basil stepped forward.

"Please remember, Philip, that my wife belongs to me alone."

"Don't I know it? Won't that hateful ring remind me? But I suppose you don't mean to keep her all to yourself? Why shouldn't I, a relation, have as good a right to kiss her as Mr. Willoughby, eh?"

"I stand in the place of a father, Mr. Fane, and the child has always been like one of my own," said the solicitor, with a tear twinkling in his eye, as he laid his hand on his ward's

shoulder and gazed lovingly at her beautiful, flushed face.

"Well, and I am ready to regard her as my sister. Say, Lady Fane, will you be my own sister Flo?"

"Certainly not," as she placed herself by her husband's side. "I have one brother," with a side glance up into Sir Basil's face to show that she had not forgotten that he once called himself by that decorous title till it was merged in a nearer and a dearer one, "and most of my cousins are dead; so please remain my cousin, and if you will," with a slight bend of her head, and a smile that nearly upset his balance, "my good friend as well."

"Your friend, your servant, your slave!" with a mocking bow, and a strange glitter in his eyes.

That slight touch of her velvet cheek had mounted to his head like too large a draught of champagne. He felt that he could scarcely answer for what he would say next, so turned away as if struck by a French guide-book which Sir Basil had just thrown upon the table.

There were so many questions to ask Mr. Willoughby, that Flora quite forgot him, and Sir Basil left the room in order to speak to his steward.

Nothing disturbed the peace of the quartet who sat down to dinner. Philip had quite recovered himself, and took pains to be amusing.

Sir Basil could see that there was an undercurrent of bitterness in his chaff, but set it down to the fact that he was always making uncomfortable comparisons between himself and his more fortunate cousin.

The mere sight of Greylands raised his covetous desires, made him remember his own impecunious position and upset his temper.

Flora was in an anxious state of mind meanwhile, fearing lest the advent of these two guests should make it impossible for her to get down to her brother.

But Sir Basil came to her directly she had

gone into the drawing-room, and told her that the brougham would be round in ten minutes, so she had better start first and he would follow as soon as politeness would permit.

She gave a little pout at being deprived of his company, but hurried upstairs to collect the various presents. The best of all was the one for Eustace—a handsome travelling-bag, which she flattered herself would be very useful to him when he was able to move about like other people.

The moon was shining in calm splendour over the trees and the dewy glades, where the deer were hiding amongst the bracken as she drove through the park—a happy young wife, suspecting no evil, and looking forward to no misfortune.

As the carriage stopped for the gate to be opened a figure darted forward and poked its head through the open window.

"Good evening, Lady Fane," said a voice, which she recognised at once, and which sent a chill through her blood. "You think you've done a fine thing in marrying a baronet, but before long you'll be wearing a widow's weeds, and he'll be hanging on the gallows!"

James Carey shrieked out the last word as the footman pulled him down from the step, and the light fell on his haggard face with the evil gleam in its eyes.

"Beg pardon, my lady," said the footman, touching his hat, "but I never saw him or he shouldn't have spoke to you."

"Never mind; drive on," said Flora, faintly. "He must be mad!"

Yes, he must be mad—that was the only solution of the mystery. What connection could there be between the gallows and her husband?

(To be continued.)

A HASTY WORD or an indiscreet action does not dissolve the bond, but the friendship may be still sound in heart, and so outgrow and wear off these little distempers.





["CLOT LDE! WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS MASQUERADE?" SAID MAJOR L'ESTRANGE.]

NOVELETTE.]

## FALSELY SUSPECTED.

### CHAPTER I.

A hot, scorching day in July, when to talk appeared even too great a fatigue, and one cared to do nothing but to lie dreaming, half-asleep, half-awake, and listen to the murmur of the waves, as they lazily lapped the pebbly beach, for even they appeared too indolent to rush in tossing and foaming as was their custom, but would leisurely bathe the hot stones, and then roll back to the big ocean.

But the *Skylark* was going, notwithstanding all—but then the *Skylark* always is going at Brighton; and the little fat man in white trousers and blue jacket, the owner of the same, had screamed himself hoarse in asserting that fact to the visitors assembled on the beach, as one of the vessels—for there were two of them—was launched into the water with scarce wind enough to flap her sails, as she slowly moved on to the air of "A life on the ocean wave," which resounded from the cornet on her deck.

"Are you going, ma'am?" asked Mr. Collins, as a lady in black advanced from where she had been watching a man eating burning tow, with as much relish as though it had been roast goose, to the remaining boat which was fast filling for a trip on the quiet sea.

She was about twenty-six years of age, petite and fair, with dark, restless eyes, and a clear, white forehead scarcely visible under the dead-gold hair which buried it beneath its curling mass; but, as the man's words fell on her ears, she smiled, thus disclosing a row of pearly teeth from between her coral lips, and for the moment the pained look which was customary to her features passed away.

"You don't think it will come on rough

before we return?" she asked. "The clouds seem to be gathering to the west."

"Lor! no, ma'am," replied the former, as he cast his nautical eye in the direction indicated; "no fear 'o that. The breeze is freshenin' a bit, which 'll make it all the pleasanter," and at last, having secured her as a passenger, he turned to inform other intending cruisers that "The *Skylark* was going."

"I hope I shan't be ill," said a young girl, who sat next to the lady who had now taken her seat, when with sundry creaks and groans the little vessel at last floated on the blue waves, her white canvas spread to catch the little wind there was.

"Are you a bad sailor, then?" asked the latter.

"It is the first time I was ever on the sea," she answered; "and, although I promised Harry I would go with him, when I saw some of them when they came back yesterday after a sail I felt half-afraid. There was one girl looked so awfully ill, and she gave a little scream as the boat gave a sudden lurch."

"Oh! you are a silly, Meggie," said her brother. "But that is nothing with her," he continued, addressing the lady in a tone of apology for his sister's weakness; "she always screams at everything, from a spider to a fly, whilst the sight of a mouse would send her into hysterics."

"It is too bad, Harry!" said the girl. "But you won't believe him, will you?" she asked.

"I suppose not," replied the lady, but as the freshening breeze, which Mr. Collins had prognosticated, threw the vessel on her side, thus causing the waves for the moment to administer an unexpected bath to those seated in that unfortunate position, Meggie uttered a terrific yell, which brought a smile to her companion's face, whilst at the same time she assured the girl there was no danger, the truth of which it took the combined efforts of both to convince her of, it being a fact she was unable to understand until they were once again on terra-firma.

"I am afraid you did not enjoy your trip very much?" said the former, as they stepped on the beach, and she held out her hand to say good-bye.

"I should have been miserable alone with Harry," was the reply; "but you were so kind, and didn't laugh every time I was frightened. I should so much like to see you again," and the girl looked with wistful eyes into the sad ones of the elder lady.

"I shall be very glad," said the latter. "My name is Mrs. Glenny, and I am invariably on the beach in the morning. But you have not told me who you are?" she added, with a smile.

"Oh, my papa is Sir Percy L'Estrange, and we are staying at the Grand. Mamma is an invalid, you must know; but here they come," she added, as a gentleman, walking by the side of a bath-chair, was seen approaching. "Don't go yet; they will be so glad to see you."

"You must excuse me to-day," Mrs. Glenny replied. "Another time, perhaps," and, hastily shaking hands, she turned, but not before the sudden spasm of pain which passed over her features had become noticeable to her new friends.

"I am sure she was not well," said Marguerite to her brother. "Did you see how white she turned; and she is so nice! I am sorry."

"So nice!" scornfully repeated Harry, who prided himself on his worldly wisdom. "Just like you, taking violent fancies to people you have never seen before and know nothing about! I can tell you, Miss L'Estrange, I don't think my father will be well pleased. What do we know of this Mrs. Glenny, just meeting her on a pleasure-boat?"

"Oh, go on, Harry! One would think you were fifty instead of a boy of twenty!" said his sister, and then she hastened to her mother's side, excitedly pouring out her tale of the day's adventures into the invalid's

ears, whilst the former walked on with the baronet.

Lady L'Estrange listened to the girl's story, a gleam of pleasure passing over her pallid face as the former laughingly repeated the terrors she had experienced on board the *Stylaris*, ending with a glowing description of Mrs. Glenny.

"I wish you had seen her, mamma," she said. "She is so pretty; and there was no harm in my talking to her and wishing to see her again, was there?" asked Meggie, as she remembered Harry's assertion that Sir Percy would be displeased.

"Well, dear, of course, it is not advisable for young people to form acquaintances with persons of whom they know nothing; but Mrs. Glenny may turn out to be a lady for all that, and a very desirable acquaintance. Did she tell you anything of herself?"

"She only said she was a widow, mamma dear, but I am quite sure she is a lady," said Marguerite, when, Sir Percy L'Estrange turning round at the time to say they had better repair to the hotel for lunch, the conversation ended.

"His Uncle Harry written to say when he will be here, father?" asked Harry, who, having partly appeased the appetite he had gained from his sea trip, entered into the general topic of conversation between the other members of the family, which was the advent of his father's brother.

"Yes; I only heard this morning," replied the latter. "He is awfully shattered, he writes, from his late service in the Sudan, but hopes, with rest and good air, quickly to recover himself."

"How old is he, papa?" asked Marguerite. "I haven't seen him since I left school; but he seemed quite young."

"He is young, my child, compared to me," answered the Baronet. "He was the son of my father's second wife. He can't be more than thirty at the outside. Do you think so, Maddie?"

"I should think not," replied Lady L'Estrange, languidly raising her head from the sofa-cushion where she was reclining. "By-the-bye, Percy, have you heard anything of Colonel Petro lately?"

"Petro, poor fellow! I don't think anyone has. Both town and country house has been shut since his wife's death, and I understand he has left England," her husband replied. "And that reminds me, Maddie," he continued, "I must put a veto on Meggie making friends promiscuously. This Mrs. Glenny Harry was telling me about may be a very nice person, but after what happened in the Petro's family one cannot be too careful;" and he was about to leave the room after having thus delivered himself when a sudden exclamation from his daughter, who was looking from the window on the passers-by, caused him to turn.

"Come here, papa dear, quick!" she said. "There is Mrs. Glenny."

And, as Sir Percy approached, a little black-robed woman passed on the other side. It was too far distant to discern her features, but the outlines of her perfect figure were distinctly visible as the soft fabric of her dress was blown around her by the wind which had followed the quiet calm of the early morning; and, as a sudden gust lifted her hat from her head, her dead-gold hair became unloosed from its fastenings, whilst it was lifted and tossed by the unruly breeze.

## CHAPTER II.

WHOLLY unconscious that she was an object of interest to the party at the hotel window, Mrs. Glenny, after having recovered her hat, and restored her hair a little to order, proceeded on her way towards the Hove.

It was quieter there, and she could sit down close to the water's edge, and hold commune with the white-crested waves as they rolled in and tumbled at her feet, whilst she re-

viewed in her mind the circumstances which had led her to be alone in the liveliest of watering places.

The lodgings she had taken were in a small street, some distance from the sea, but she felt suffocated within the four confined walls of that small parlour, feeling as though she would choke, until, having the streets behind her, she could feel the sea breeze fan her cheek, giving her a fresh desire to live, away from the misery which had but a short time back caused her to pray for death.

She needed not the hours as they passed, so wrapt was she in memories of the past. One or two nannies with their infant charges passed, whilst as in a dream she heard their childish prattle, and then the notes from the band on the pier were borne to her on the wind—like the strains of an Eolian harp—to die until another breath stirred them into renewed life.

But the restless eyes still retained their restlessness, and at times she would start with an undefined fear.

She had taken a book from a small bag she carried, endeavouring to read; but unable to fix her wandering mind on its contents, she let it fall on the wet stones, falling again into a deep reverie, until the growing shadows of evening gathering around her she rose with the intention of returning home, when, with a perceptible shudder, she again resumed her seat, crouching so that the waning light should not fall on her features, as two men passed close by.

They were deeply engaged in conversation, and her black dress in the growing twilight caused them to pass her without observation.

"Thank Heaven!" she ejaculated, as she watched their receding figures; and then, hastily rising, she quickly followed in their footsteps, until she approached so near as to be enabled to hear their conversation, the wind blowing the sound towards her, as from the same cause, and the roar of the ocean. Her movements were unheard by them.

"When did you come down, did you say, Alf?" asked one, a well-dressed man of about thirty-two, whose features, although handsome, were of a coarse type, not denoting gentle birth, whilst his companion appeared to have studied to a greater extent the manners in unison with the clothes he wore, the gentleman's gentleman being stamped on all his actions.

"Last night," replied Alf. "I was so deuced miserable I couldn't stay in town; although, to tell you the truth, I think it the best thing that could happen to both of us," and then the rest of the sentence was inaudible.

"But whose fault was it?" asked his friend. "Oh! mine, I suppose, but who'd have thought she'd a cut up so rough?" said Alf; "but mind you, old fellow, I'll find her out."

"And how long are you going to stay here?" inquired the other.

"Till Thursday," replied Alf. "I shall be sick of it by that time. But come on; let's go into the Aquarium for an hour or two;" and they turned off to carry out their intention as Mrs. Glenny rushed on to her lodgings.

"Lor, ma'am, you do look white; ain't you well?" asked the landlady, as with every limb shaking, and out of breath, the latter entered.

"No, I am not very well, Mrs. Durton," she replied. "Don't mind about supper. I would rather go to bed;" and ascending to the room above she soon divested herself of hat and jacket, throwing herself half undressed on the spotless coverlet of her little bed; and, when later on, the former quietly entered to know if she required anything, she lay with the dark eyes, now wearing a frightened look, still unclosed, as the moon shining in on her white face made her look almost ghastly beneath her rays.

But the door opening, with an effort she let the heavy eyelids close, when Mrs. Durton, concluding she was asleep, quietly withdrew.

How long she thus remained she scarcely

knew, as far into the silent watches of the night she revolved in her mind the danger which she had so providentially averted.

"Thank Heaven," she ruminated; "Thursday, and I shall be safe; but could it have been by design or chance that he is here? And then the L'Estranges; how strange that both on the same day should cross my path!"

To Mrs. Durton's inquiries on the following morning, she felt too ill to leave the house, but would descend to the sitting-room after a short time, and should anyone by chance call for her, please to say she had left.

"Oh! that puts me in mind," responded the landlady, "there was two gents called here yesterday afternoon, but they asked for Mrs.—Mrs. There, there, what a head I have, to be sure. I forget the name, but it worn't nothin' like yours, ma'am, so I suppose they'd made a mistake."

"Doobles, Mrs. Durton," replied her lodger. "I do not expect anyone, but feel so ill that, should such a thing occur, remember I am not here," and with a sigh of relief she let her weary head fall on the pillow, as the door closed behind the former.

What an interminable length did those three days appear, as she wandered from parlour to kitchen, and from them to a tiny yard, which was the extent to which her restless feet could roam in the limited space of Mrs. Durton's domicile, when she would for a few moments stay to listen to the history of the Durton family, going back to the third and fourth generation, with which that lady would acquaint her, until wearied with the doings of those dead and living bearing the name, as equally of the virtues with which the late Mr. Durton, poor dear, was supposed to have been endowed by his faithful spouse, she would again return to the sitting-room to endeavour to while away those long hours with a book, until, weary of her imprisonment, she would close her eyes in a waking dream.

It seemed as a fresh pleasure when once again she wandered to the beach, and for the time being her thoughts became distracted from the trouble which had so recently filled her mind. There she watched the yachts, whilst their owner again plied for passengers, until her restless limbs could stay no longer, and she strolled on to where there were fewer to disturb the quietude of her thoughts, when throwing herself on the warm pebbles she listened but to the roar of the waves, as they danced and foamed in the sunlight, until the sound of voices behind her caused her to turn her head.

"Oh! Mrs. Glenny, I am so glad to have met you!" exclaimed a bright, girlish voice, and Marguerite L'Estrange held out her hand to the widow, who rose to meet her. "Look, here is papa; you must let me introduce you," and, notwithstanding the edict which the Baronet had passed, Meggie led her new friend to where her father with Harry were advancing.

The latter raised his hat as they approached, and Sir Percy could not avoid but too palpably showing the admiration he felt for the petite figure as she returned the salutation, whilst a something in the lovely face seemed familiar to him.

She was a lady, there was no doubt about that, which a few moments' conversation sufficed to show; and far from blaming his daughter for forming friendships with strangers, he was, later on, as loud in his praises of the little woman as Meggie herself.

"I have to thank you, Mrs. Glenny, for your kindness a few days ago to my foolish little girl," he said, as he cordially shook her tiny gloved hand.

"I am afraid you overrate any little I may have done towards her comfort!" was the reply, "though I am only too glad that she so highly esteemed it."

"I am led to understand from my children that you are by yourself here. You must find it very lonely," said Sir Percy; "but I hope now that you will oftener join our party."



"You are very kind," and a vivid flush suffused the widow's face; "but I rarely feel lonely."

They had sauntered up from the beach to the parade, the Baronet evidently forgetting his former prejudice as he succumbed to the charms of the stranger; and ended by introducing her to his wife, whose bath-chair was seen approaching.

And when they at last parted, "Charming, perfectly charming!" was all the answer he gave Lady L'Estrange when she asked his opinion of their new acquaintance.

### CHAPTER III.

The happiness to which she had been a stranger so long seemed suddenly to have thrown its light over the life of Mrs. Glenny; the restless, half-frightened eyes would now brighten with unconcealed pleasure, as hour after hour was passed in the society of the Baronet's family.

"Uncle Hersey will be here to-morrow," said Marguerite one afternoon, as they strolled where, the tide being low, numerous little ones of all classes paddled with naked feet on the wet sand; "and you will like him so much, Mrs. Glenny."

"Shall I, indeed?" laughed the latter. "Are you quite sure?"

"Quite," was the resolute reply; "for everyone loves uncle."

"Supposing there should be an exception to the rule and I did not like him, what then?"

"I should say you had very bad taste," said Meggie; "but you will like him, I know. He is much younger than papa, very handsome, and a major in the army, although he is scarcely thirty. Was your husband older than that when he died?"

The question was so unexpected that for the moment it remained unanswered; and as the girl noted the pained expression which passed over the features of her friend, now white as marble, she regretted the want of thought which had led her to enter on such a subject.

"I am so sorry," she said; "have I grieved you?"

"No, dear," was the reply; "it was a sudden smart here," and she pressed her hand to her heart; "that was all. He was twenty-nine."

But it was some seconds before the effect had passed away, and then the conversation drifted into general topics as they resumed their walk homewards.

A few days later the Major arrived—a fine, soldierly-looking man of six feet, with a handsome, sunburnt face, telling, though but too plainly, of the privations and sickness to which he had been exposed in the African desert, but which only served now to surround him with a certain martial glory, thus adding greatly to his value in the eyes of his admiring relatives, and causing Marguerite to worship him as a hero.

It was the zenith of her happiness to walk with him in the King's-road, to be seen with him on the pier—he, as she considered, naturally the admired of all, whom she expected to be regarded by the outside world with all the pride with which she invested him; and when at last the occasion arrived when she could introduce him to Mrs. Glenny, she eagerly awaited the moment when afterwards she could have the opportunity of asking her if he was not lovely!

At first the latter would laugh at the girl's enthusiasm, but as the days wore on, and she gradually became to look forward with pleasure to the morning *rencontre* when the Major was ever present, she watched with a secret dread the power over her life and happiness which she felt that presence was beginning to hold.

"Are you really going to leave Brighton, Mrs. Glenny?" he asked, as Marguerite had repeated to him her friend's intention.

They had separated a little from the rest;

it had grown to be a custom in these last happy days for Uncle Hersey to monopolise the widow in their daily meetings.

"I think so," she replied, as the warm blood mantled her cheek with crimson, and the lids drooped over her blue, tell-tale eyes. "I have had a long holiday, which since I knew Meggie has indeed been a happy one."

"I see, and I am the bugbear; is it not so?"

She raised her eyes smiling to his face.

"I should scarcely think so," she said.

"Then why are you in such a hurry, and August not yet out?" he asked, "I wish you would stay. Won't you, now, to please me?"

She seemed to be turning matters over in her mind, not answering for some moments, as silently they wandered on, leaving Harry and Meggie leaning against the barriers, watching the performance of some highly-educated dogs below, until passing the new pier they sauntered to a seat not far from the sea.

"Sit down," he said, "and give me my answer here. Why are you so anxious to run away?"

"Because," she answered, with a gasp, "it is imperative."

Her face had now become deadly white.

"And you say you are alone in the world. Surely you can do as you choose?" he added.

"Would to Heaven that I could!" she said, with sudden excitement; but as she noticed his eyes fixed on her she recovered herself almost immediately, whilst he stooped to pick up a handkerchief she had dropped.

It was a dainty fabric of the finest cambric, and as he returned it to her his eyes fell on "Lucille" deftly worked in the left corner.

"Is that your name?" he asked.

"It is," she answered.

"How strange!" he replied. "It is not a common one, and I never knew but one who had the same. She was about fifteen then, now nearly ten years ago; but your face so reminds me of her, poor Lucille!"

"Why poor Lucille? Is she dead, then?" and Mrs. Glenny carelessly kicked the pebbles with the toes of her tiny boot.

"Not dead that I know of," he answered, "though I believe her father would rather it had been so."

"Had she no mother?"

"She had, but she broke her heart, and a year after she left her home she died; but it is a painful story, and one, perhaps, I have no right to repeat. And so," he continued, changing the subject, "you are determined to leave us?"

"I fear so," was her reply. "In a few days I must return to London. But we have quite forgotten our young companions. Don't you think we had better rejoin them?"

"Yes. But promise me first that you will not run away without bidding me good-bye. When I say that I don't mean a formal shake of the hands, just as you would give anyone else; but I want you all to myself just for a last ramble. You see I am very selfish," he added, as she raised her eyes, with a puzzled expression, to his face. "But you are not offended—tell me you are not?"

"No, not that, Major L'Estrange," she replied, with a half sob; "and if you really wish it I will see you to-morrow evening by the Chain Pier, as I shall most probably return to London the day following."

They had now reached the spot where they had left Meggie and her brother, the former still intently watching the performing dogs, who, having done their turn, were quietly looking on whilst their companion monkey was put through his manoeuvres, Harry the while greedily devouring the *Morning News*.

"Look here, uncle," he said, as the latter, with Mrs. Glenny, now approached, "have you seen this?" and he pointed to a paragraph in the paper. "There was a fearful accident last night on the London and Brighton line; several killed, and over forty injured."

"Is there a list of those identified?" asked Mrs. Glenny, as a strange light came into her

blue eyes. "Will you allow me to see after you have finished?"

"Pardon me," said the officer; "by all means, Mrs. Glenny."

And he pressed the paper into the hands of the widow, notwithstanding her protestations that she would have it after he had read the account.

The supposed cause of the catastrophe and the description was only cursorily glanced over by her, the names alone of the dead and wounded appearing to have a strange fascination for her.

Three weeks had elapsed since those days when she became a voluntary prisoner in Mrs. Durton's rooms, and yet a presentiment had taken possession of her that this accident would have an influence over her future, until she felt a sudden conviction that she should read his name amongst the dead, and her heart gave a bound of hope, whilst she still almost doubted her senses, as she read the name *Alfred Hayes* amongst the killed.

"No bad news, I hope, Mrs. Glenny?" said the Major, as, strive as she might, the former could not conceal the feelings which had taken every vestige of colour from her face, leaving it white as marble; but with a strong effort she controlled her voice when she answered,—

"No, oh, no; not for me, but I was thinking how dreadful it was for those who, perhaps, last night watched and watched for the beloved ones who never came. It has made me so timid that I feel I shall be afraid to venture in a train for a few days, so shall remain at Brighton for a short time longer."

"Oh! I am so glad," said Marguerite, whilst Uncle Hersey only looked into the widow's eyes, and she knew that he was as glad as she.

The days began perceptibly to draw in, making the long evenings even more enjoyable for the moonlight wanderings, although the damp, chilly nights told that the summer was fast dying away, and still Mrs. Glenny remained.

The assignation had been duly kept at the Chain Pier, and many were the twilight walks taken when, with the Major as her companion, she had strolled by the sea shore, until love had woven around her a mesh from which she could not escape, and with the stars alone as her witness she had vowed to become the soldier's wife.

The sadness which had formerly thrown a shadow over her lovely face had been lifted like a veil from her features until one could scarcely recognise in the lively little woman of to-day the sad, careworn Mrs. Glenny on that first morning when she sailed in the *Sky-lark*.

"Of course, my boy, it is not for me to dictate," said Sir Percy, when first told by Hersey of his engagement to Lucille, "but don't you think it would be advisable to know a little more of the woman in whose hands you are about to place your life's happiness or misery before entering into a contract which you may regret when, alas! it is too late?"

"That will do, Percy. I consider I am quite old enough to be the best judge of my own actions, and have seen sufficient of the world to discern between a lady and an adventuress," was Hersey's reply; therefore the Baronet remained silent in the future, only trusting that his brother's anticipations of happiness would be realised, determined for his sake to give a hearty welcome into their family to his sister-in-law.

### CHAPTER IV.

The wedding between Major L'Estrange and Mrs. Glenny a month later was carried out in a very quiet style. A second marriage, Lucille said, was always the better for being as private as possible.

She was alone in the world, she averred—not a friend or relative who cared whether she was a corpse or a bride; so, with Marguerite as bridesmaid, and Harry as groomsman,

they were married on the return of the L'Estrange's to the metropolis.

London was still quiet, the shooting having taken many away, and it was arranged, after a short stay in Paris, that the newly-wedded pair should repair to the house which the Major had taken in Upper Berkeley-street.

Lucille was delighted with her new residence; the furniture had been selected with the greatest care and good taste, and on the evening of her arrival the feeling of home happiness, to which she had so long been a stranger, seemed to steal with ineffable sweetness over her senses.

Marguerite was the first to welcome her, and as she pressed the girl to her breast she lavished caresses on her.

"Oh! Meggie, this is indeed kind," she said, when that young lady led her to the room which, under her supervision, had been most tastefully arranged for her reception.

"I am so glad you like it," Meggie replied; "and mamma, whom you know is so much better, has engaged all the servants, who really appear to have done her credit, for they all fall into their places as naturally as though they had been born in the service; the butler is the only puzzle."

"What about him?" asked Lucille, laughing. "Had he no character?"

"Well, that is it," replied Meggie, dolefully. "The gentleman he lived with, he said, had gone abroad, but papa, who knew the same to be true, said it was all right, for he knew his master, Colonel Petro, well."

Lucille, who was busily engaged unstrapping a small travelling bag, scarcely seemed to hear the other's remark, as she became suddenly interested in the contents of the same.

"I don't think it was very wise to engage him," she said, her head still lowered over the bag, "but if Hersey is satisfied I am What is his name?"

"Hayton," was the reply. "But I won't weary you any more, dear. Here, Clotilde, help Mrs. L'Estrange to dress, as dinner is ordered for seven o'clock," and leaving her aunt to the care of a little French maid, Marguerite hastened to her own room.

Hersey was awaiting them when they descended to the drawing-room previous to dinner, and but a few moments elapsed before the latter was announced.

Lucille was standing by her husband, assuring him she was not the least fatigued after her journey, but turning as the new butler opened the door for them to proceed to the dining-room she started perceptibly when her eyes encountered those of the latter, whilst the colour which had risen to her temples suddenly left her as pale as marble, and she felt her limbs tremble beneath her as she descended the stairs.

To all Marguerite's questions respecting their Paris trip she gave answers without apparently paying any attention to the purport of the same, her mind seemingly engrossed with another subject.

"Do you see what you have done, Hayton?" shouted Hersey, as in removing the plate from his mistress the soup it contained was spilt over her silk dress.

"I am exceedingly sorry, sir," was the man's reply, "but I think Mrs. L'Estrange will admit that it was not my fault," and he fixed his eyes on the face of Lucille, who, without looking at her husband, said it was unfortunate, but her train was so placed that it was almost impossible for the man to avoid tripping over it.

But Lucille was thankful when the time came that they should adjourn to the drawing-room, where at least, even though she failed to recover fully from the shock of the discovery she had made, still she felt more at ease than when, facing her husband, she had to suffer the insolent, triumphant look with which the other surveyed her.

The end was too terrible to contemplate, and when Marguerite asked Hersey what he thought of the butler, Lucille was the first to speak in his favour.

"I think my sister-in-law must have been mad to engage a man without any reference," he said, adding that it was palpable he was drunk the first time he waited at table.

"No, really, Hersey, it was my fault; you must not blame him for that accident to my dress," and she opened the piano that she might thus divert his thoughts from the subject.

But nothing could be better than the future conduct of Hayton. He was devoted to his duties, which he fulfilled in an exemplary way, and, far from intruding himself on his mistress, he was so distant and respectful in his behaviour that she almost doubted the conviction of her own senses.

"And who is your correspondent, Hersey?" she asked, as one morning later on she entered the library, where the latter was so deeply engrossed in the reading of a letter that he did not hear her enter as she advanced to where he was sitting.

"It is from a very old friend of Percy's," he answered, "which he has forwarded to me to read—a Colonel Petro, poor fellow, who has written this, as he says, his last letter; but sit down, Lucille, darling, you don't look very well, and I will tell you all about it."

"You remember, dear, I told you some time since how you reminded me of a girl I once knew, whose Christian name was yours. She was his daughter, an only child, but she broke her mother's heart, and through her her father became an exile in a foreign land."

"Was it through her marrying?" she began, excitedly, but checked herself as she met her husband's gaze fixed on her now flushed face.

"Have you heard the story then, Lucille?" he asked.

"No, dear, no," she replied, quickly, "at least not all."

"I did not know you had been told anything; however, that was the case—the girl on whom they had lavished every care and affection, the daughter whom they had hoped to have seen one day united in happiness to one in her own station, disappeared from her home on her obtaining her majority in company with her father's servant, who doubtless loved the fortune she brought him far more than the girl so ill-suited to be his wife."

"But, oh! the misery of those after years!"

It was Lucille who spoke, and Major L'Estrange looked at his wife, as with her eyes fixed on the table she carelessly played with a pen she had nervously picked up.

"No misery," he said, "could be too great a punishment for the woman who could thus repay years of love and affection, and draggle an honourable name in the mire."

"And did they hear, know nothing of her afterwards?" she asked.

"I don't think so," was the reply. "Mrs. Petro survived the blow but a few months, and now the Colonel—doubtless, by this time dead—has penned this, his last letter."

"Good heavens, Hayton, how you startled me!" said Hersey, as raising his eyes he saw that the butler had entered the room.

"Sir Percy and Miss L'Estrange are in the drawing-room, sir," the man replied, when with one glance at the bowed head of Lucille, as she drooped over the table, he withdrew as silently as he had entered.

"That man is like a cat about the house," said Hersey, as he rose, and drawing his wife's arm within his own adjourned to the drawing-room.

## CHAPTER V.

"THE Times, ma'am!" and without raising her eyes Lucille took the paper from the salver which Hayton held towards her.

Major L'Estrange had gone out early, having an appointment with the Baronet, and deep in thought the former was reviewing in her mind the events of the last few months, clinging still to the happiness she felt in her husband's love, whilst the sword of Damocles hung over

her head; but as that hated voice sounded in her ears she gave a sudden start.

It was not lost on the man, whilst it brought the conviction to his mind that the game was in his own hands.

"And so you know me, Lu—Mrs. L'Estrange?" he said.

But the only answer he received was a half-suppressed sob, as his companion covered her face with her hands.

"I thought you were dead, Alf," she gasped. "I thought—"

"Yes, I know," he replied, before she could complete the sentence. "You thought I was killed in that railway accident. Rather unfortunate they should make such mistakes in identifying the killed, isn't it?" he asked, in a jeering tone.

"Spare me! Oh, Alf, spare me!" she cried.

"Why?" he said. "Spare you because you chose to leave me, and no sooner do you think that the breath is out of my body than you marry a swell! I wonder what he will think now of his beautiful wife—my wife!"

"Oh, no—no, it cannot be true! Merciful heaven, it cannot be true! Leave me; you know you never loved me, and when my money was gone you hated me," and in her paroxysm of grief she caught the rough hand of the man in her own soft palms.

But as an animal would enjoy the torture of its victim so the latter seemed to take delight in the agony so plainly visible on his companion's face.

"Oh, I hated you, did I!" he sneered.

"Well, there wasn't much love lost between us, I'm thinking," but, with a sudden change in his tone he continued, "I don't want to be hard on you. What compensation are you willing to make me if I promise not to come between you and —"

"Hush!" she cried. "Breathe not his name; it is too good to be mentioned in connection with such a man, too good to be borne by such as me. But Heaven knows I sinned in ignorance, and to save him from the degradation he would feel, to save that name from becoming the gossip of clubs, the scandal of servants' halls, I will make you an allowance of two hundred pounds a-year whilst you keep your promise not to disturb my peace."

She had risen from her seat, her *petite* figure drawn to its full height, whilst the excitement had given a brilliancy to her eye, entrancing the colour on her face, which gave such a charm to her fair beauty as she stood like a queen dictating terms to the man before her.

"Humph, two hundred pounds a-year!" he said, after a pause, during which he appeared to be weighing the chance he stood of gaining more, or losing all. "Well, that will do; but I must have half-a-year in advance."

"I cannot give it," she replied; "I have not so much by me; but, stay, stay!" she cried, as Hayton made a step towards the door. "Yes, yes; leave here to-night, and tomorrow the sum you require shall be at your disposal."

"Am I to call here for it, then?" he asked, significantly.

"No," she answered; "meet me at the top of George-street at five o'clock, and I will place it in your hands, but go now; there's the Major's knock," and Hayton quickly left the room.

All traces of the excitement through which she had so lately passed were no longer visible, as schooling herself to meet the trial before her Lucille awaited her husband's entry.

She moved to the window, apparently watching the passers-by, feeling that not one in that human tide of life could bear the wretched load of misery which was weighing her down, in the dawn of what she had hoped a new and happier era in her existence.

"It cannot be true," she inwardly ejaculated, "but a horrid nightmare from which I shall awake. Something whispers to me that it is so, and yet," she pondered, "can I doubt the veracity of my own senses?—can I disbelieve what my own eyes have seen?"



"Deep in the land of dreams, darling?" and as she turned Hersey's hand was laid gently on her shoulder.

"I was thinking, dear, not exactly dreaming," she answered, as she lifted her face for the accustomed kiss, but when his lips touched hers a shudder thrilled through her frame.

"Why, you are quite cold, Lucille! Come to the fire, like a good girl; and how pale you are—are you not well?"

"Yes, yes," she replied, "I am quite well;" but the tender words, her husband's fond caress, recalled to her mind in all its terrors that other scene enacted but a few moments before, and scarcely had the words left her mouth than she fell senseless into that husband's arms.

It was but a short time that the pale, still face rested on his shoulder, but to Hersey it appeared as hours; and he was about to place her on the sofa, whilst he summoned assistance, when a gentle pressure of her hand deterred him, and with a sigh she once more unclosed her eyes, to rest them lovingly on his.

"I am better now, dear," she said, in answer to his inquiries. "I cannot think what made me so foolish, Hersey, but I felt low and nervous this morning. I am afraid I am rather superstitious."

"Why, Lucille, what makes you so?" asked Hersey.

"I had a frightful dream last night, and I cannot get it out of my mind," she replied. "Oh! Hersey, I dreamt that we were parted; that instead of the love for which I prayed for you on my knees you thrust me from you with curses on your lips."

"And you believe in dreams?" He smiled.

"I believe in presentiments," she replied.

"Nonsense, love," he answered, as he kissed her fair face. "Why, what should come between us, Lucille, if all you tell me is true? If you bear for me the same love as I do for you, what should part us?"

She did not reply, but a slight shiver thrilled through her veins whilst still resting in the arms which were so lovingly entwined round her; she appeared fearful of destroying the happiness of that moment.

But the gong sounding for lunch aroused her to a sense of the danger which still threatened her.

"Where is Hayton?" asked the Major, as a neat parlour-maid proceeded to officiate at the duties of the table.

"I don't know, sir, but I think he must be gone; he is not in the house, and Cook says all his clothes have been taken from his room."

"And have you seen that none of the plate has been taken from his pantry?" said Hersey, as the girl gave her information; and Lucille dropped her head over her plate, that the colour which she felt rush to her temples might not be seen by the former.

"He has taken nothing what doesn't belong to him that we know of, sir; leastways, the plate is all right."

But the man's behaviour was a puzzle, which Major L'Estrange could not understand, and in his own mind he determined to keep a watch that he did not show himself near the house.

Lucille made little or no comment on the circumstance, merely saying she had often heard of servants who behaved in that manner, and asked if there were any wages owing to him?

"No, the rascal," replied her husband; "he took good care to receive them first, as I had only paid him that morning;" but a knock and ring prevented further conversation, as, visitors being announced, Lucille was only too thankful to adjourn to the drawing-room.

It was Meggie and Lady L'Estrange, and of course the news respecting the butler was discussed, the former declaring she had always predicted something of the kind would occur, whilst her mother could not sufficiently express her sorrow that she should have had anything to do with it.

"You had Percy's letter, of course?" she

said, after a time, addressing Hersey. "Poor Colonel Peto, he is dead. We had a telegram this morning."

Lucille had just taken a cage from the chain on which it was suspended to show Meggie a new treasure, in the way of a beautiful canary, as the words fell on her ear, and the room, with its contents, appeared to whirl before her, and with a sudden scream she dropped the bird to the floor.

"Oh! have I hurt it, Meggie?" she asked, as, with a strong effort recovering her self-possession, she stooped to regain the fallen pet; and then the former, replacing the cage, drew her on one side, that she might tell her a secret respecting herself.

Meggie could not look on her uncle's wife in the relation in which she stood towards her, but as an elder sister, in whom she could confide. What her mother appeared to have forgotten to understand, and in all her love troubles, or fresh conquests, she flew to Lucille to unburden her mind.

And as they seated themselves within the recess of a window, where Hersey and his sister-in-law could not overhear their conversation, she commenced to tell the former of her engagement to Herbert Reston, a lieutenant in the army, and the dearest fellow that ever lived.

Lucille seemed absent and distraught, not entering into the girl's conversation with her usual sympathy, but the name Reston caused her to give greater attention than she otherwise would.

"Do you know, then," asked Meggie, "his father was a captain in the same regiment, but he retired long ago; for, you must know, they are very rich, and have a splendid place at Hampton. But we are all going to a *matinee* to-morrow, and you must come—we have taken the seats—and then I will introduce you."

Lady L'Estrange making a movement to depart, Meggie could say no more than to tell Uncle Hersey to be sure and bring Lucille to-morrow, which promise being given she and her mother bade them good-bye.

And from the window against which she still stood Lucille watched the light-hearted girl as she re-entered the carriage, envying the young heart that freedom from care and misery which was almost breaking hers.

## CHAPTER VI.

CLOTILDE was quite loquacious when assisting her mistress to undress, respecting the strange manner in which Monsieur Hayton left the house; and it was very evident that the latter had been captivated by the charms of the little French maid, a feeling fully reciprocated on her part by the tone in which her comments and regrets were conveyed.

Lucille made but little reply, further than to say that the major would soon obtain someone in his place.

"But please do not pull my hair so unmercifully, Clotilde," she exclaimed; "my head aches fearfully," as the latter gave an unusual tug at the golden tresses as they fell over the fair shoulders of her mistress.

And, in truth, Lucille's head did ache with a dull, throbbing pain, driving all sleep from her eyelids, and leaving her feverish and wearied after the long hours of that restless night.

"Bring my breakfast to me, Clotilde," she said; "I am not well, and the Major knows he is not to wait for me."

So the former brought up a tempting *déjeuner*, prepared by the latter herself, to induce her to eat; and to please him Lucille swallowed a few mouthfuls.

"How do you feel now, dear?" asked Hersey, as, a few hours later, he advanced to his wife's bedside.

"My head is still very bad, Hersey," she answered. "I cannot join you at the theatre, but you go, and tell Meggie how sorry I am to disappoint her."

"I don't think there is any necessity for me to go," replied her husband. "I will call on Percy, and tell him the reason we shan't be there."

"No, no, don't do that," said Lucille, as she anxiously raised herself in the bed; "they will be thinking I am seriously ill," and she gave a little half laugh. "You go, there's a good boy. See the clock now. You would not have time to go to your brother's, and they will be awaiting you at the doors."

"All right as you will; my darling, but I don't like leaving you like this;" and he stooped down and kissed her pale face.

And for some moments after he had left the room—after she had heard the hall door close behind him—Lucille hid her face in the snowy pillow, to shut out from herself, if possible, the thought of that she was about to do, as she contemplated in agony the deceit she was called on to practise towards the man whose love was her very life; but the minute hand, which to her appeared to go round with increased speed, told her that she had no time to lose in the carrying out of her object, and hastily summoning Clotilde she commenced to dress.

"Not that dress, Clotilde," she said, as the latter brought forward a dark blue velvet and silk, the day being chilly. "Bring me that very old grey one which I told you I should not wear again."

"Oh! madame, but that is so shabby!" but Lucille stopped further parley by taking the same from her hand, which she began to put on, when, seeing the astonishment depicted in the girl's face,—

"Can I trust you, Clotilde?" she asked.

"Madame, Clotilde is *fidèle*," she replied.

"Then disguise me," was the rejoinder, "So that even should I meet the Major he would fail to recognise me, but be quick, and then yourself conduct me to the street-door, and should any inquiries be made, it was the dressmaker for madame, you understand?"

"I comprehend, madame," said the girl.

"You can rely on Clotilde."

"Give me my jewel case," continued Lucille, as having completed her costume she selected a diamond necklace with pendant, and secreting the same in her glove, prepared to descend.

The stones which had flashed in her face, as she lifted them from their velvet case, appeared to burn her flesh, as pressing them firmly in her hand she followed the maid down the stairs.

A little pet dog came whining round her, to be taken out, but a word from his mistress told him it could not be, and, further than that, there was no one to interfere with her movements.

"Faithful Clotilde," she turned to say, as the latter was about to close the door, "and your fidelity shall meet with its reward." Drawing a thick veil over her features she continued with hurried steps to the scene of her appointment, and was just turning a corner in that direction, when the clear, merry voice of Meggie L'Estrange fell on her, and accompanied by, good heavens, Hersey himself.

What could it mean? Where were they going that they were not at the theatre? Doubtless being anxious about her, he had induced his niece to return home with him instead of waiting to witness the end of the performance; and as these thoughts momentarily flashed through her brain the hot blood rushed to her face, whilst her limbs trembled beneath her. But it was too late to retract now; her disguise was so complete, that although her dress brushed Meggie's as she passed by, they did not give a second look at the wretched creature, who, panting and breathless, was soon out of sight.

The man behind the counter even looked suspiciously at her, when, a few moments later, she offered the diamond necklet in pledge, but in other days, when driven, as she thought by the same wretch, for whom now she jeopardised her life's happiness, to part with valuable trinkets, she had applied to him,

he asked no further questions, but advanced the required sum.

Even Hayton failed to recognise her, and was about to break into a brutal laugh as she advanced towards him, when she silenced him by an impatient gesture.

"Take it," she said, as he was about to speak, "and let this be the last time we meet. And remember this day six months the same will await you as my solicitor's. There is the address;" and she pushed it into his hand, "but the first time you endeavour to make further extortion it ceases altogether; that is my determination."

The man looked at her, beautiful even in that disfiguring disguise, and he knew it was useless to quibble with the terms she had dictated. She was deadly pale, and, pretending not to see that, in his insolence he held out his hand to grasp her own, she brushed past him with the avoidance she would have given a viper in her path, and was quickly lost in the deepening shadows of the autumnal afternoon.

The tears gushed to her eyes, and her limbs almost refused to bear her onwards, as with a beating heart she once more reached her own door.

Clotilde was waiting to receive her, but her countenance betrayed the danger she knew her mistress to be in before the latter had time to question her.

"Hare, madame, in here, quick!" she cried, as Lucille was about to ascend the stairs to her own room, and opening the door of an ante-chamber she almost dragged her in.

"Monsieur came back with Miss L'Estrange just as you had gone out, and wanted to go to your room; but I said you had only then fallen asleep, and had asked not to be disturbed, but, notwithstanding, it was all I could do to keep him from entering. I was so frightened, and I fancy Monsieur noticed it, for he looked so strange."

"Where—where are they now?" gasped Lucille, as the girl concluded.

"Monsieur said he would go back with the young lady, and then perhaps madame would be awake. So go up quick, madame, quick. I do tremble so."

Scarcely feeling her feet on the soft carpet, as she sped upstairs, Lucille flew across the corridor which led to her own room.

The door was slightly ajar, left so as she thought by Clotilde to avoid detection, but as she opened it further to allow of her entrance she stood as one transfixed. The thick veil she had worn was lifted from her face, now white as marble, whilst her eyes, distended in the agony of fear, bore the hunted look of an animal at bay, when with a cry, in which all the suffering of her overwrought senses gave vent, she crouched down where she stood.

## CHAPTER VII.

"Clotilde, what is the meaning of this masquerading?" said Major L'Estrange, as the former appearing on the scene he pointed to his wife. "You told me your mistress was asleep."

The girl trembled at the sound of her master's voice, so unlike the tone in which he usually addressed his servants; and it was with difficulty that she could assist him to remove the prostrate Lucille to the sofa on which they lay dead.

She could see his face so stern and hard, each nerve twitching with the inward agony of doubt, uncertainty, and broken faith, as with arms folded across his breast he gazed long and earnestly on the unconscious girl before him; and then, as a faint sigh escaped her lips, he left her to the care of Clotilde, and passed from the room.

When she recovered consciousness her recollection returned to her mind in twofold force. She had an indistinct remembrance of her husband's presence as she entered the room, and in reply to the questions she asked Clotilde she knew such was the case, and that

he left her without a word; and her heart sunk within her, knowing as she did he would never forgive her deception she had practised on him; and forgetting Clotilde's presence, forgetting all but the misery which made her even long for death, sob after sob broke from her until the couch she lay on shook with the vehemence of her grief.

But as the violence of her sorrow found vent she became more calm. She would see Hersey, and confess all—yes, all—even though it robbed her of his love, and he sent her from him. She would keep nothing back, he should know her as she was—one who had sinned in ignorance, not the false, designing creature her actions might lead him to believe.

Quickly exchanging the dress she had assumed for a silk wrap, and plentifully bathing her face that she might obliterate the signs of her late emotion, she brushed her luxuriant hair from her temples still throbbing painfully, and told Clotilde to tell Major L'Estrange she had recovered, and would wish to see him.

But the Major had left the house, leaving word that he would not return to dinner.

Lucille's heart beat very quick as the message was delivered to her.

"Gone, gone!" she repeated to herself, "and not a word! Oh! Hersey, Hersey, my own, my darling! and I love you so."

But no tears came now to her relief. She sat gazing into the burning coals, whilst a thousand resolves entered her mind. She would fly from the home which she could no longer claim as a shelter; she would renounce the name she had no right to bear, and thus give back to the man she loved dearer than her life the freedom he could legally demand.

She drew her escritoire to the fire, and with a trembling hand commenced her task, and had written the commencement of her sad story, when, with a sudden impulse, she threw it on the flames.

"No, no!" she said; "I cannot write, I must see him and tell him all."

And merely penning a few lines to say she had left his house and where he would find her, she bid him come there on the morrow, when she would be more composed, and would explain all.

Nerving herself for the occasion she once more assumed her usual dress and descended to the dining-room, when, after partaking of her cheerless dinner, she threw herself into an easy chair, dreaming away the hours until the time arrived for her intended departure.

A hope that Hersey would yet return before then deterred her from hastily carrying out her object; but hour past hour, until, feeling the uselessness of further delay, she was about to ring for Clotilde when a loud knock at the hall door arrested her attention.

A fear that some accident had occurred to Hersey for a moment overcame her, and with a beating heart she awaited the coming of the servant who had replied to the summons.

"Some one from St. Mary's 'Ospital wants to see you, ma'am."

"Show him in," replied Lucille, her fears increasing as the messenger entered.

He was a short, stout man, very much out of breath, evidently from running, and taking off a very greasy hat he twirled the same round and round in his hands in a caressing way, as he asked "if it was Mrs. L'Estrange he was a speakin' to?"

"I am Mrs. L'Estrange," she replied, anxiously; "what is your message?"

"Please, mum, I was to tell yer to come to the 'ospital as quick as possible; some man who's a dyin' wantin' pertickler to see yer."

A relief was perceptible on the countenance of Lucille as she heard the man's words. Thank Heaven, no harm had come to Hersey. But her curiosity was excited, until what at first appeared a puzzle became the dawn of a new hope.

"The man's name?" she asked.

"Hayton, mum," was the reply; "he is awfu' bad, they say."

Lucille asked no further questions, but telling him that she would be at the hospital almost as soon as he was, rang the bell for the servant to show him out.

Her face, which had been so white, was now flushed with excitement, as summoning Clotilde she hastily went to her room to prepare for her visit.

The letter she had written to Hersey was still on the table where she left it, but she quickly put it in her pocket, and but a few moments elapsed before she entered the cab which had been brought to the door for her.

"Should the Major return before I do tell him that I was summoned to the hospital," she said, as the footman closed the door.

Telling the cabman to drive quickly, but a short time elapsed before they drew up at the door of the institution; and on Lucille informing them who she was, and the reason of her visit, she was soon conducted to the ward in which the unfortunate man lay.

"I am afraid he's almost past speaking," said the nurse, as Lucille followed her to the side of the little white bed, one of many ranged along the side of the ward where the groans of the sufferers mingled with the last gasps of the dying.

But with a cry of agony Hayton turned as they advanced.

"Not so quick, nurse," he said; "I ain't dead yet," and a ghastly smile played over his features, which but a moment before were convulsed with pain.

"Why did you send for me?" asked Lucille, as the nurse turned aside. "I hoped we had met for the last time."

"Yes, Mrs. L'Estrange," replied Hayton, laying a stress on the name, "Heaven was against me, or I shouldn't be here; the accident which will be my death will be life to you. Do you understand?"

"No, tell me quickly what you mean!" and in her anxiety she clutched the hand of the dying man.

"I—I," he continued, as a spasm of pain passed over his face, "I am not Alfred Hayes, but his twin brother Tom; he, Alf, was killed on the railway."

"Thank Heaven that I am spared that sin! But why," she turned angrily, forgetting in her contempt for the vile part he had acted, for the misery he had caused her, that she was in the presence of death, "why did you endeavour to injure me?"

"Why!" and he gave a laugh, which grated on the ears of his listener, "why, because I was hard-up, and saw my chance, which accident had thrown in my way, though I was as astonished when I saw who my mistress was as you were terrified when you saw your husband's butler. I knew from Alf how you had treated him, the cat and dog life you led, and though I only saw you once, yours was not a face easily forgotten."

Pain and exhaustion for the moment caused him to rest, whilst Lucille, with mingled feelings of disgust for the dying, and thankfulness for the deliverance thus accorded her from a misery worse than death itself, only prayed that he might have strength to complete the tale of his villainy.

"Yes, yes," he said, as he marked her impatience, "I'll make a clear breast of it. I shall die the easier, maybe. I was hard-up, as I said, and when I saw you the idea came into my head how to make money. I knew Alf and I were as like as two peas in a pod, and you know the rest."

Lucille turned from the bed, as she saw by his countenance that Tom Hayes had but a short time before him ere he would answer for his sin before a higher judge than she; and as he held out his hand, faintly begging her forgiveness for the wrong he had done her, she took the same, and with the words "I forgive you" hurried from the ward.



## CHAPTER VIII.

"The man cannot live through the night, madam," said the Doctor, who came forward as Lucille descended the stairs. "The wonder is that he was not killed on the spot. I believe he was an old servant, was he not?" and he looked interrogatively into the face of the fair visitor.

"He lived in my husband's service," was the reply. "I am sorry for him," and with no further word of pity for the sufferer Lucille drew down her veil, and wished the doctor good-night.

She had no desire to hear further particulars of the accident which had befallen Tom Hayes; all she wanted was quiet and rest from the overstrain which had been put upon her every feeling, and as she once more entered her own room a sense of relief was uppermost with her, when, bidding Clotilde to attend her, she retired for the night.

Hersey had not yet returned, and as it was still early she decided to be patient, but the excitement through which she had passed, now that a reaction had taken place, already began to tell upon her, and when hour passed hour, and no Hersey, her brain gave way beneath her load of misery, and when Clotilde approached, to find her in a high fever, she failed to recognise her as she stood by her bedside.

A messenger was speedily dispatched for a doctor, as also to the Major's club, but although the former was in speedy attendance no tidings could be gained of the latter.

"Where is Major L'Estrange?" asked the physician of Clotilde, as he told her her mistress was dangerously ill, evidently some severe shock to the system; but the girl could only say that her master had left the house at such a time, but where he had gone no one knew, and she burst into tears. "Crying will do no good," was the other's rejoinder, that he would take on himself to send an experienced nurse, and in the morning their friends had better be communicated with.

Sir Percy was the first at the house, starting immediately on receipt of the message brought by one of the servants, as also in reply to a letter he received from Dr. Bernard, in which he told him the state of the case, and of his brother's absence.

In answer to his inquiries he could derive no information from any of the household in Berkley-street, and after giving all necessary directions, until Lady L'Estrange should call later on, he hastened to his brother's club.

Yes, Major L'Estrange had left town, they understood, but he had left no address, and a visit to his solicitor meeting with the same result, he returned more puzzled than ever to where his wife awaited him in the house of his sister-in-law.

"How is she now?" he asked, anxiously.

"The doctor gives no hope, and you had better insert an advertisement in the *Times* and *Telegraph*, for there has evidently been some serious quarrel," and Lady L'Estrange gave her husband an open letter in Hersey's handwriting.

It had been left for Lucille, a few words in which the writer bid her good-bye, not knowing when, if ever, he should return. Then followed the terms he had arranged for her separate maintenance, but no allusion to the painful episode which had led to this result.

Meggie was broken-hearted when she heard how near her friend was to the gates of death, and in answer to her earnest entreaties she was permitted to share the duties of the hired nurse.

Day passed day and still no reply to the advertisements which daily appeared, and the spirit of the sufferer still fluttered on the brink of eternity.

Even Meggie, the most sanguine of all, began to fear her uncle would never return to see her again in this life; but that evening, to her great relief, Doctor Bernard gave a faint hope, and at the same time her mother entered the room with a telegram in her hand. It was

from Hersey, who would be there almost as soon as the same would reach them.

How anxiously they awaited his coming, minutes appearing as hours, every nerve strained to catch the first sound of his footstep. But at last it came, and as Meggie rushed to the door she almost started when she gazed on the features of her uncle, scarcely recognising in the worn face that of Hersey L'Estrange.

"Thank Heaven," he said, "she still lives," when he would have rushed to the bedside had not Meggie gently interposed.

"One moment," she said, and Hersey, who could scarce restrain his emotion, knelt by the girl's side.

As his warm lips touched hers Lucille opened her eyes, which for the first time during the four weeks which had elapsed since the eventful day on which she was taken ill beamed with the light of reason.

"Is it you, Meggie?" she asked. "Why have you not been to see me before?"

"I have been nearly every day, darling, but you have been so ill, Lucille," said Meggie, as she approached.

"And Hersey," continued the sufferer, "has he come back, Meggie?"

"He has never been away, but you must be very quiet, or he will go now," said the latter, and she motioned to Hersey not to let her know that he had ever left her.

"Here I am, Lucille," he said, as he tenderly caressed her. "Thank Heaven, darling, you know me now, don't you?"

"Yes," replied the girl, "but let me remember, and she passed her hand, now so wasted and transparent, over her forehead. "There was something came between us, Hersey, was there not?" she asked.

"Nothing shall ever come between us now, my love," he replied. "Only get well, Lucille, my own darling, and we will forget the past."

"But oh!" she shuddered, "it was such a horrid dream."

"Never mind horrid dreams—they are all past now, and you will soon be yourself again, my own wife; but here comes nurse, and she will scold me for not letting you go to sleep, so rest, dearest, for my sake," and pressing his lips to hers he replaced her head on the pillow, and with Meggie left the room.

Lucille had safely crossed the slight bridge which had threatened to launch her into eternity, but though the crisis was past week after week elapsed before she was restored to health.

And how cold the days had become during which she was hovering between life and death. Even the late autumn flowers were no longer visible, whilst the early frost settled on the bare trees, and thick fogs told that the year was fast dying away.

But the change in Lucille was so that she almost shuddered as she viewed herself in the mirror Clotilde held.

Her once round cheeks were pale and sunken, whilst her blue eyes, now so large, appeared to stand out alone untouched; and in place of the long golden tresses which Clotilde had brushed with such tender care a short crop of unruly curls covered her head.

"What a fright!" she exclaimed, as she returned the glass to the girl's hand, but Major L'Estrange coming in at the time he kissed the white, thin face, and his loving arms encircled her wasted form.

"Silly girl," he said, "won't the roses return with the summer? and a few weeks back you had no hair at all," and he playfully rubbed his hand over her head.

"Hersey," she said, at last, when, Clotilde having left the room, they sat together over the bright fire. "I have something I want to tell you, something I have wanted to tell you long ago, but I could not—I was so weak."

"Yes, darling?" he queried.

"You remember, Hersey, in those happy days at Brighton, when you first learnt my name by my accidentally dropping my handkerchief, that you told me you once knew a

girl of the same name, and she was very like me?"

"Yes, I remember," he assented.

"Well, dear, I was Lucille Petro!" She stopped to mark the effect of her words on her hearer, and, as she noticed a shade pass over his countenance, "Hear me to the end, Hersey," she pleaded, "before you condemn me! I have been more sinned against than sinning! Indeed! indeed I was!"

"I was but fifteen when you knew me then, and you, like others, thought, doubtless, I had as happy a home as a girl could wish for, an only child, and wealthy."

"I thought so," said Hersey.

"But to me it was the most wretched, as far as home comforts. Of course, I had all that my station in life commanded, but to love and affection I was a stranger. I never heard a loving word, or knew what it was to be caressed. My father ever visited on me his disappointment that I was not a son; and my mother, a beauty in her day, grew jealous, and almost hated me, as I displayed the charms in all their freshness which with her were growing worn and faded."

"And had you no companions of your own age?" asked Hersey.

"The county families lived at a long distance from each other," replied Lucille, "and my father was too proud to allow me to associate with the farmers' daughters, whilst the clergyman of the parish had no children. Thus matters went on until I was eighteen, and it was imperative that I should be brought out."

"You had more society then?" Hersey remarked.

"I began to feel less the want of parental affection as I was launched into 'society,' as you say, and should doubtless have been what the world calls happy had I not been pestered by the attentions of a gentleman old enough to be my grandfather, and who, I was privately told, had become a suitor for my hand. He was enormously rich, and, as my father urged, in answer to the repugnance I expressed at such a match, that there was not a girl in the county but who would jump at the chance of becoming the Duchess de Morny. But neither the high-sounding title, nor the fabulous wealth I was supposed to have within my grasp, had any other effect than my giving a decided refusal to the offer of my elderly lover; when my father, driven to desperation by my obstinacy, as he styled it, insisted on his right as a parent to make me bend to his wishes."

"Except the Duke was present I was banished from the family gatherings until my proud spirit was supposed to be broken, and the only enjoyment left me was the morning gallop, which, weather permitting, I invariably took, in company with my father's groom."

"The latter was a young man, only four years my senior, and, little by little, I found myself confiding to him, the only creature who appeared to sympathise with me in my trouble, how I was placed with regard to the Duke. He would listen to me, urging me to hold out, and not let them sacrifice me, as he termed it; and, acting on his advice, I became more resolute than ever in resisting my father's commands."

"Whilst you stood on a worse precipice," Hersey remarked.

"Too true!" Lucille replied. "My father at last growing impatient, my consent was no longer deemed necessary, and I was informed by my mother that every preparation was being made for my wedding, which was to take place in a fortnight from that day."

"A fortnight! Oh, heavens! I thought, 'only a fortnight, and then my girl life was to be passed with this decrepit old monster,' in which light I regarded the Duke."

"I dared not speak to the maid who attended me, as I knew whatever I said would be carried to my mother. Hayes was the only creature to whom I could unburden my soul, and, with tears in my eyes, I told him all."

"Don't cry, Miss Lucille," he said, as our horses met, until he could place his hand on mine.

"And, when I looked up, I saw in his eyes a look which almost frightened me, when, drawing the off rein, my horse moved aside, and, for the rest of the ride, we were silent. But that look haunted me. He was very handsome, and I—I fancied I loved him."

Lucille heaved a sigh.

"Will you hear me to the end, Hersey?" she asked. "I shall be happier when you know all."

And as he assented she continued,—

"I appeared after this to acquiesce in my parents' wishes, but, when the morning arrived which was to make me a duchess I had left my home with Hayes as his bride.

"The first few months after our marriage I was not unhappy; he was so kind that I endeavoured to hide the disgust I almost felt for his society; but after a time I could not conceal my impatience at his ignorance, and, when he insisted, lastly, on introducing his companions to our home, I declared I would not permit it, an open rupture was the result; low taunts and recriminations followed, until I could bear his brutality no longer."

"And you left him?" asked Hersey.

"Yes dear, I was weary of my life, and left London where our home was, hoping at Brighton for a time at least to forget my past existence. You know how I met Meggie there, and what followed? But the worst part of my trouble has to come. I knew ten years had so altered me, that you would never recognise in me the young girl you once knew. No, no, don't ring for lights," she said, as Major L'Estrange rose with that intention, "what I have yet to tell let me say in the freelight, with the shadows of the reclining day deepening around us, and your hand in mine, for when you know all, maybe, Hersey, it might be the last time you will hold me in your clasp. Oh! don't look like that," she urged, "for sinner as I have been, my love for you has ever been the same, so powerful, that it was its very power which made me act as I did, for I could not, oh! Heaven I could not, live without it!" and then, with her head nestled close to his bosom, she breathed in his ears the story of her wrongs, the agony she had suffered at Hayton's revelation, and his dying confession.

They were silent as Lucille concluded her narrative, and then, straining her to his breast,—

"My darling, my darling!" he said, "you have, indeed, suffered."

"And you forgive me, Hersey?" she asked.

"Even as I hope to be forgiven, Lucille, my poor lamb; truly more sinned against than sinning."

"May I come in?" asked a girlish voice, and Hersey, answering in the affirmative, Meggie entered the room.

"Why you two lovebirds, billing and cooing all in the dark!" she laughed, as advancing to Lucille, she threw her arms round her neck. "They told me you were here," she continued, "so I determined to announce myself. Harry is downstairs, as disagreeable as he can be."

"What, you and Harry quarrelling again?" laughed her uncle. "I never saw such an amiable brother and sister in my life."

"Oh! we are not so bad, uncle," said Meggie, "only he is jealous, because—" and she blushed so deeply that it was perceptible even in the freelight.

"Because what?" asked Lucille. "Is it a settled matter then?" referring to Meggie's attachment to the young lieutenant.

"Yes, and that is what I came to tell you. Papa and mamma have given their consent, and his family are delighted, as naturally they would be," and Miss Meggie surveyed herself in the glass with much satisfaction.

"Well, Lu, let us see what we can do to reconcile Harry to the inevitable," said Hersey, as he proceeded to conduct his wife

tenderly from the room, followed by Miss L'Estrange.

But Harry did not appear so thoroughly heartbroken at the thoughts of losing his sister as that young lady had led them to believe; and when, a few months later, the wedding took place, Lady L'Estrange was the only one who grieved to part with the bonnie girl who carried with her to her new home the wishes of Lucille and the Major that it might be crowned with as great a happiness as filled their own; and so we will leave them, trusting that the passing years may fail to tarnish the lustre now thrown over their young lives.

Sir Percy and Lady L'Estrange never sought to know the cause which induced Hersey so suddenly to leave Berkley-street. What they gleaned from the ravings of Lucille they very wisely kept to themselves; whilst Clotilde, on her marriage, which happened shortly afterwards with Hayton's successor, received a handsome dowry from the Major in acknowledgment of her reticence on the subject.

[THE END.]

A DISDAINFUL MAID.—A young city man took a lady in the suburbs out for an evening's drive. During the ride he asked the young lady to attend the *School for Scandal* with him, evidently meaning the dramatic play by that name. With chilling sarcasm she said she had heard there were schools or something of that kind in the city, but that she did not believe in gossip, nor was she addicted to tattling, and hadn't much respect for anybody that mixed themselves up in it. The young man almost lost his breath, but ejaculated, "Not for the world," and got the lady home at once. That couple have not taken ozone together since.

THE BREAD OF PERSIA.—"Persian bread," writes a correspondent now in Afghanistan, "is a very peculiar production; it is made in flaps, in some cases about a yard long. If ever the Persians reach the advanced state of morning newspapers they might have them printed on their bread, so that they could read the news while they eat and swallow everything literally. On seeing these large flaps I have often thought they must resemble the blacksmith's leather apron, which was the old standard of Persia; if the bread is not made after that model they have managed to produce an article very like it, not only in size, but in colour and toughness at the same time. We have had now nearly two months' experience of this material, and it was a delight on coming here to get to our breakfast the first morning bread that was made on a somewhat later model than an old leather apron. The chances of finding a change in this detail of our daily life on reaching the Indian camp had often been discussed on the way, particularly at breakfast, when we were hard at work trying to masticate pieces of the leather kind. One of our party said he knew Major Rind, the commissariat officer of the other camp, and that he was not a man likely to come away without the means of baking good bread, but we had been so long used to that Persian kind that these assurances did not inspire much hope. There had been doubts, but these had been dispelled at our first breakfast. Butter actually appeared on the table with the bread. I fear that for the moment we either forgot or thought lightly of the splendid pillaus in the breakfast prepared for us by the Governor of Khorassan's cook at Meshed, or the many delicacies Ali Mardan treated us with at Sarakhs. One man whilst munching a great mouthful of bread and butter—the amount in his mouth slightly interfered with his articulation—said it was almost as good as arriving at Dover. Of course he meant to add that it was after having been a long time in the East away from England, but at that moment he had not a moment to spare, and left the sentence in its incomplete form as here recorded."

#### AT SIGHT.

EVERY one who has kept his eyes open through life must believe that there is such a thing as love at first sight. Nothing is more true than at a first introduction to any one we "take" to him or her, as the colloquial world expresses it, or else we feel an instinctive repulsion.

Occasionally these involuntary likes and dislikes are altered on further acquaintance, but in the majority of cases they will be found to be justified. Indeed, it would be a safe rule to follow, not to have too much to do with any one against whom is experienced this intense antagonism.

I think it is hardly fair to say that love at first sight—the intense love that a man feels for the woman he intends to marry—is born, full-grown, in a moment. One thing, however, is certain, that the seed of an affectionate likening, deepening down into perfection and reliance, may be sown with a single glance of a pair of pretty brown eyes, or lie cradled in a passing dimple. It is true that this makes us very much creatures of circumstance, but no one with his wits about him would claim that we are anything else.

We were never asked where we would like to be born. Still less does fate consult us about the colour of our hair, or whether we should like a fine, straight, commanding Roman nose, or a fat little ugly snub served out to half of the human race.

The same with the event of life—marriage, which stands half-way between birth and death, and which is as important a factor in a man and a woman's existence as either. And just as destiny blew us where we stand, a mere thistle-down, the sport of the winds, so chance brings to us a fair-speaking youth or maiden; and the twain like each other, go on and love each other, and, let it be hoped, though it does not always happen, live happily ever after.

The first cracks made in the smooth surface of friendship are as dangerous as those which come to the sheeny satin garment of a young married love. Freedoms of speech and exactingness of attention, neglect of due forms, liberties beyond the license of just intimacy, all these are cracks to be stopped in the beginning, else the time will come when no masonry of tact or of affection can repair them.

In the training of youth we guard anxiously their words and deeds; we educate the eye, the ear, and the hand; we discipline their mental powers by vigorous and continuous study; we cultivate their various faculties and powers by exercise; but their imaginings, which we call fancies or dreams, we leave to be developed by the chance influences of the playground or the library. Yet what people imagine is in some degree the foundation of what they are and the source of what they do and say.

SERVANTS IN BERLIN.—They appear to have an odd way of doing things in Berlin with regard to the characters of domestic servants. I am informed by one who has resided in that eminently conservative city for some ten years that his wife once ventured to discharge a cook, after submitting to a long course of depredations at this domestic's hands. It is the custom there to write the character of the servant in a book, which all servants are obliged to keep. My informant in this instance ventured to inscribe the statement that dishonesty was the reason of dismissal. A few days after the discharged domestic appeared with a policeman, who said that the character must be altered, as it would be impossible for the woman to get another place if the truth remained in the book. It was thought prudent to accede to the demand of the myrmidon, as it appears that six days' imprisonment is the penalty for the slightest remonstrance to one of these officials. This fact—for it really is a fact—shows what a protection to employers this German book-system is!



## RIGHTLY PUNISHED.

"But you know very well I'm not in earnest, Claudia."

Mr. Chesterton bent over his wife's forehead and left a careless kiss there, but Mrs. Chesterton never lifted her eyes from the dimpled baby in its snowy cradle-nest.

She was very fair and delicate, like an anemone, with gold-shining braids, and blue eyes full of shy, tremulous depths of tenderness; and her husband, a tall, handsome fellow of two or three-and-thirty, might well have been proud of the true-hearted treasure that was all his own.

"You are not going out to-night, Fred?" she said, softly.

"I must, Claudia; upon my word I can't get rid of the engagement. I promised Miss Devereux."

The head drooped again, and with an altered expression of countenance Mrs. Chesterton began to arrange the satin quilt edged with foam-white swansdown around the sleeping babe.

Fred Chesterton looked at her for a moment, and then burst out laughing.

"Jealous, I declare! Well, I never would have suspected it of you, Claudia; I thought you were too sensible for that."

Mrs. Chesterton's cheek flushed scarlet.

"I am too much attached to my husband to stand unmoved by and see him devoting himself to any other woman."

"Now, what nonsense that is, Claudia! As if I meant anything by it!"

"Then why are you Miss Devereux's constant cavalier and most devoted attendant?"

"It's only to tease Harry Neville, upon my word. He is so jealous, and it's such a capital joke."

"Is not he engaged to Miss Devereux?"

"Yes, but—"

"Then why should you both conspire to tease him, at my expense?" asked Mrs. Chesterton, with the blue eyes sparkling dangerously.

"Claudia, you're a little goose. Don't you see the joke of the matter?" demanded her husband, patting her cheek.

"No I don't."

"Neither does Neville," laughed Mr. Chesterton; "so you're even. Well, my dear, I shall not be out late, but you'd better not sit up for me; it steals the roses away from those dimpled cheeks. *Au revoir!*"

And the fashionable husband lounged away to shine in the circles of gay society, and Claudia was left alone, with only the soft breathings of her slumbering infant and the monotonous ticking of the clock to bear her companionship.

She did not sob, nor cry, although the unshed tears made her eyes humid and luminous. Claudia Chesterton was not one to break into childish outcries and lamentations, even though her heart sickened and grew weak under the burden of its unsyllabled grief.

"Only two years since we were married, baby," she whispered, softly, as if the sleeping child could hear or comprehend her murmurs. "Only two years, and he finds me wearisome already. Oh, baby, baby, when you grow up to be a man, be tender with the heart you take to yourself, for a woman's heart is so easily broken. Oh, so easily, my babe!"

Miss Mabel Devereux was sitting the same evening in her boudoir, with Natalie, the French maid, brushing out her superb chestnut-brown hair, and Mrs. Jarvis nestled on the sofa opposite, with a cashmere shawl fallen off her shoulders, and her two little plump hands clasped inside an ermine muff.

"I'll wear the rubies to-night, Natalie," said Miss Devereux, carelessly, as she glanced over her treasure of glittering jewels. "Mr. Chesterton likes the rubies. He says I always remind him of the beautiful Jewess in *Ivanhoe*, when I wear my crimson silk dress and those rubies."

"Mabel," said Mrs. Jarvis, energetically, "you ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

"Dear me," said Mabel, artlessly opening her superb black-brown eyes, "what's the matter now?"

"You're a heartless, tormenting, conscienceless, shallow coquette!" slowly enunciated Mrs. Jarvis, pausing a second between each adjective.

"My dear," said Miss Devereux, "you're too unsophisticated for anything. What have I done?"

"You've flirted with Mr. Chesterton until you've nearly broken his poor little wife's heart, and quite driven Mr. Neville distracted."

"Oh, pshaw!" said Mabel, indifferently. "You know very well I don't mean anything. I only do it to tease Harry."

"My goodness," said little Mrs. Jarvis, setting her rosy lips close together, "the only thing that reconciles me to being a foolish woman is the fact that I can't be tormented by one. Mabel, I should like to box your ears."

"Thank you, my dear," said Miss Devereux, demurely.

"To tease Harry, indeed!" echoed Mrs. Jarvis. "If Harry had a spark of common sense he'd break the engagement."

"Not he," said Mabel, with a slight sparkle of contempt beneath the silky, curled lashes that shadowed her beautiful eyes. "His chains are too secure for that."

"The more shame to you, then, for playing with his feelings in this sort of way!"

"My dear," said Mabel, "when you get on your high heroics, there's no doing anything with you. Tell me what you think of the trimmings on this dress."

"It's his only fault," pleaded the young wife, half indignant that any mortal save herself should dare to censure Mr. Chesterton. "And, after all, one can hardly blame him when one reflects how fond of society he is, and how he is appreciated everywhere."

"Yes, but, child," argued Mrs. Jarvis, "it's a fault that makes you ridiculous—a fault that will end in his total estrangement. Of all creatures I most detest a male flirt."

"But what am I to do?" questioned Claudia, with her lips quivering like a baby's.

"My dear," said Mrs. Jarvis, "you don't know any more than that morsel of humanity in the cradle there. Get up; ring the bell for your maid; dress yourself!"

"But what for?"

"To go to Miss Erminstorm's ball to-night—your card of invitation lies there on the table."

"I know; but Fred has already gone, and—"

"No matter. You can follow him, can't you? Here, Mary, I want you to make your mistress as charming as possible. Where's the white tulle dress, and the wreath of pink sweet peas, with the little curly tendrils that hang down so prettily among your hair? No questions, Claudia; only do as I tell you, and we'll have Mr. Chesterton setting an example to the most domestic of husbands within a month."

Mr. Chesterton was making himself ineffably delightful to Mabel Devereux that evening, when a mischievous voice twittered into the lady's ear,—

"*Prenez garde*, Mabel; the enemy has entered your own dominions!"

"What do you mean, Miss Ellerslie?"

"Look, and see!"

Involuntarily Mabel glanced across the room to where Harry Neville was seemingly absorbed in the softly uttered words of an exquisitely attired blonde, whose golden hair was wreathed with sweet peas, and whose brilliant beauty made Mabel's own darker face appear almost faded by contrast.

"Mr. Chesterton," she said, biting her lip, "I was not aware your wife was here to-night."

"Neither is she."

"That must be her ghost then, yonder."

"By Jove!" ejaculated Mr. Chesterton, nearly as much astonished as his companion; "I believe you are right! Perhaps she has changed her mind."

And Mr. Chesterton wondered within himself that he had never before realised how very beautiful Claudia was.

Just a month afterwards, and Claudia Chesterton sat in her boudoir, smiling and radiant as a queen, when Miss Devereux was announced.

Mabel came in, looking rather pale and wan; she advanced hurriedly toward the lovely young blonde.

"Mrs. Chesterton," she began, "I have come here to plead my cause with you; to ask you, as one woman may appeal to another, to give back to me the love you have stolen away."

"I!" echoed Claudia.

"Give me back Harry Neville's heart," piteously pleaded Mabel Devereux. "You have your husband's love, your child's smiles—all that the world can give; while I—oh," she added, passionately, "I shall die if he forsakes me!"

"Miss Devereux, you never thought of this when the world of fashion was ringing with the story of your flirtations with my husband!"

"Because I had never looked into my own heart. Oh, Mrs. Chesterton, will you forgive me?"

"Mabel," said Claudia, suddenly folding her arms about the downcast figure, "look up; Harry Neville's love is as much your own as it ever was."

And she told Mabel Devereux of the stratagem Mrs. Jarvis's fertile brain had concocted to set the troubled elements of true love right in their channels.

"You do not blame me, Mabel?"

"No," said Miss Devereux, slowly, "I do not. I blame only myself. Claudia, will you let me kiss you?"

And their lips met, a signal of amity for the future, forgiveness for the past.

Mabel Devereux had scarcely gone when Fred Chesterton himself entered.

"Claudia, my wife," he said sadly. "we have been strangely parted of late. Have I lost my wife's love?"

"Would you miss it, Fred?"

"Would I miss the daylight? Would I miss the sunshine? Oh, Claudia, I am miserable! I am sick of the world which interposes an invisible barrier between you and me. Let us leave it to its own hollow charms; let us be all in all to each other. You cannot care for Harry Neville as you care for me!"

"I never cared for him, Fred, never; yet he has helped me to win back your fleeting heart. Fred, I have been [wearing a mask; let me throw it off at last."

And little Mrs. Jarvis had the satisfaction of knowing that her plans worked to a charm.

F. H.

STREET FLIRTATIONS.—Whatever idea the young girls who practise street flirting may entertain of their seemingly innocent pastime it may be set down as a certainty that when a respectable young man desires the acquaintance of one who may some day become his wife he does not go out in the street and seek her acquaintance through a flirtation. But, on the other hand, the flirt of the street, no matter how innocent and fair her intentions may be, is the last person he would seek as his life companion. He desires purity without and above suspicion. The young lady who engages in this kind of pastime should bear in mind that she not only endangers her reputation and leaves a stain upon her good name, but that her name is a byword among those with whom she flirts, to be bandied about in the taverns, at the street corners, and, perhaps, in more disreputable places in the city, fastening on her otherwise fair name a stigma or stain that will follow her years after she sees her folly, and attempts to mend her ways.

## FACETIE.

You don't understand your business, landlord; did you never have a gentleman stop with you before?" "No, not if you are one."

A PLEASANT story in grammar is told of a school girl. She was parsing, and came to the word "quarrel." "Quarrel," she said, "is plural, because it takes two to make one."

"My young friend, wit is a dangerous gift," said a dull man to a sprightly girl, who was fond of a jest. "You are in no peril from its possession, at all events," she retorted.

"Ah, captain," said a fresh young man on an ocean steamer, "when you board a vessel where do you get the timber?" "Ugh," replied the captain, looking him over critically, "we get it out of the log, of course."

"Come, come, my dear!" said an indulgent mother to her only hope; "the sun has been up these two hours, and here you are not out of bed yet!" "Oh, well, the sun goes to bed at dark, and I'm up till ten o'clock," was the reply.

A TEACHER was endeavouring to explain a question in arithmetic to a dull scholar: "Suppose you had had one hundred pounds, and were to give away eighty, how would you ascertain how much you had remaining?" "Why, I'd count it," replied the hopeful.

HIGHLY ARTISTIC.—(At a cabstand). Daughter: "Papa, do take that cab yonder!" Father: "Why that one particularly?" Daughter: "It is painted yellow, and yellow harmonises beautifully with my new hat."

UNION PARTNER: "Our traveller ought to be punished. He told one of our customers in Croydon that 'I am an ignorant fool.'—Senior Partner: "I shall speak to him without fail, and insist that no more office secrets be divulged."

GAMER said of Sir John Hill, the physician and author, "The worst I wish the doctor is, that he may be compelled to take his own physic and read his own verses." "You must reverse the punishment," said a wag; "any man who takes the doctor's physic can't live to read his rhymes."

How soon some women change their minds respecting their husbands! Mrs. Spinn was for ever telling her husband that he wasn't worth the salt in his bread, but when he got killed in a railway collision she sued the company for a thousand pounds.

A NONCONFORMIST was once arguing with a curate about episcopacy. "I should not care to live subject to a bench of bishops," he observed. "But is there no authority over you?" asked the curate. "Only a board," was the answer. "Well, what's a board except a bench with no legs to stand on?"

"Papa, did you ever smoke when you were a boy?" asked a ten-year-old lad who was vigorously eating coffeebeans to disguise the odour of a cigarette which clung to him still. "Yes, once," replied the father as he sniffed the smell of tobacco in the air. "What did your papa say?" asked the boy, with unusual interest. "He didn't say a word, my son; but this is what he did when he found it out." When the father finished the temperature of his son was several degrees hotter than the ambient atmosphere.

DIVISION OF LABOUR IN A PUBLISHING HOUSE.—One day a pious clerical friend who had consumed an hour of his valuable time in small-talk said to James Harper, the publisher, "Brother Harper, I am curious to know how you four men distribute the duties of the establishment between you." "John," said Mr. Harper good-humouredly, "attempts to the finances, Wesley to the correspondence, Fletcher to the general bargaining with authors and others, and—don't you tell anybody," he said, drawing his chair still closer and lowering the tones of his voice—"I entertain the bores."

"ONE TOUCH OF NATURE."—(George has promised his Ethel the first shot, for luck! A covey rises!) Ethel, at the critical moment: "Oh, George! perhaps they too have loved!"

EARLY PRECAUTIONS.—"Doctor, I want to get my husband to send me to Wiesbaden next season. What complaint am I to have in order to attain my object?"

ANGELINA (who has never seen a revolving light before): "How patient and persevering those sailors must be, Edwin! The wind has blown that light out six times since they first lit it, and they've lighted it again each time."

"Got anything in your purse?" asked Mr. Ball of his wife, as they sat down in the tram-car.—"Yes, dear, lining," she replies sweetly, and Mr. Ball paid the fare.

A PHILATE was once asked if he did not think that such a one followed his conscience.—"Yes," said his Grace; "I think he does follow it, as a man does a horse in a gig—he drives it fast."

Box, who does not appreciate sermons: "Well, I'd just like to know what preaching is for, any way?" Small Sister: "Why, it's to give the singers a rest."

INTENDING PURCHASER of a horse—doubtfully: "What makes him lay his ears back like that?" Dealer—more in sorrow than in anger: "Lor, sir, that shows what a sensible animal he is, sir. He's listening to all what we say about him."

SHE: "I fancy, Edward, you are making fun of me; instead of a love-letter which you promised to write, you sent me the other day a blank sheet of note-paper."—He: "That was intended as a love-letter, my darling; for my love to you passes description."

It was at the breakfast-table. Mr. Smiling-boy was telling Mrs. S. about the performance of a farce he had attended the night before.—"Ah," said he, "my dear, you'd have died laughing if you could have seen it!" Then he added, in a tone of burning enthusiasm, "How I wish you'd been there!" Even now he cannot understand why Mrs. S.'s remarks directly afterwards took such an unusually violent personal turn.

SARAH told Giles that she wouldn't marry him unless he signed the total abstinence pledge, so he signed two of them. When asked why he duplicated the pledge, Giles innocently replied that he signed two pledges, so that if he broke one he might still keep to the other.

A LEVEL-HEADED GIRL.—"Say that you will be mine, dearest Angelina." "I will, upon one condition." "Name it, my adored, and, if it were to get you to the moon—" "It is easier than that—in brief simply this, that you will invite me to spend a month in your father's house previous to our marriage." "Of course, certainly; but why do you make such a strange request?" "Well, I wish to learn to cook like your mother."

THE LATE HUSBAND.—A gentleman came home in the "wee wee" hours aye of the twal, recently, and was surprised to find his wife clad in black. "Why are you wearing these mourning garments?" he said, somewhat unsteadily. "For my late husband," was the significant reply. He has been in the house at ten ever since.

SARAH JANE (a very willing girl just entered service) happened to hear the lady of the house remark that the oil paintings needed cleaning. She utilised a bar of brown soap and the kitchen scrubbing-brush in cleaning the paintings. She had succeeded in wiping out a ship in a storm, a castle by moonlight, and her master's grandfather, when the family returned just in time to save the old woman herself. When expostulated with, Mary Jane said she didn't see as she'd done any harm; but, at any rate, her sweetheart, Bill Pots, as was a painter and paperhanger, "Should paint 'em some more—all for nothink!"

A FRIEND may be as true as steel, but then, you know, some steel is too highly tempered.

"We had short cake for tea," said a little girl to a little boy over the fence.—"So had we; so short it didn't go round."

"There is only one thing I regret about my execution," observed the condemned murderer. "What is it?" "The suspense."

A MAN who saw an apparition of his deceased wife said he was not scared, but sort of surprised, because he didn't expect it.

A RURAL obituary relates that "the deceased had accumulated a little money and ten children."

It has been found that family jars will not hold fruit, although they are apt to bear much bad fruit.

"Yes," said Clara's dear friend, when Clara, the theatrical star, showed her her photograph, "yes, Clara, I think it's a lovely picture." By the way, whom did you get to sit for you?"

"PAPA, is it nice to make remarks about people's dress?" "Certainly not, darling; what did you ask that for?" "Nothing, papa; only mamma said my dress was awfully shabby, and wondered why papa hadn't noticed it long ago."

A LADY to a friend: "What a splendid library you have! You must lend me a few books." The Friend: "I regret that I must decline to do so, because books are so seldom returned. Just fancy! All these are borrowed!"

LIZA's mother: "I've come to know, mum, what's my poor Liza's done, mum, as you should give her notice." Liza's mistress: "I have explained to Liza that it is for no fault of hers; but she is so extremely short-sighted as to be really of no use at all." Liza's mother: "Well, mum, if she is, she must have caught it here. She hadn't got it when she left home!"

A FRENCHMAN from the provinces, who was paying a prolonged visit to Paris, found his hair was leaving him at the top of his head, and took his barber to task about it. "You sold me two bottles of stuff to make the hair grow." "It is very strange it won't grow again," said the modern Figaro; "I can't understand it." "Look here!" said the countryman, "I don't mind drinking another bottle; but this must be the last."

SHE WAS CONVINCED.—"Oh, I can't sing," pleaded a young man who femininely wanted to be coaxed before gratifying his auditors. "Yes, you can. I've heard two or three of your friends say so," persisted a pretty girl to whom he had been talking. "No I can't," he repeated, getting up to go to the piano. "Yes, you can. Go on now and sing!" she urged. At last he was persuaded, and for some minutes his voice reverberated most discordantly through the room. Then he came back smiling to the young lady. "Ah!" she said wearily, "Thanks. You were quite right about the singing!" His face clouded, and he never spoke to her again.

THREE youngsters had been away for their annual holiday. On the day of their return home they found they had run out of nearly all their cash, so determined to travel third-class. When they arrived at the station, one said: "You fellows got the tickets while I look after the luggage." After the train had started, he inquired if they had got his ticket. "No," they replied; "we had only money enough for two." "Well," said he, "what am I to do when I arrive in town?" "Get under the seat," they said; "they won't see you." Just before they reached the place for collecting, under the seat he got. The man arrived for the tickets, and they gave up three. "Why is this?" he inquired. "You have given three tickets. Where is the other person?" "It's quite right," they answered; "he is under the seat!" And out he crawled, smothered in dirt, and none the better pleased for the practical joke.



## SOCIETY.

**PRINCESS BEATRICE** has not given up her painting since her marriage. She has, it is said, made several water-colour drawings during her stay in the Highlands.

The King of Denmark has created Prince George of Wales a Knight of the Order of the Elephant.

The dress of the Queen of Denmark for the marriage of her son, Prince Waldemar, was one of the most beautiful and artistic toilettes of the present season. It was composed of a train and corsage of velvet in heliotrope colour of a reddish shade. The long train was cut into deep pointed scallops around the rounded end, a narrow plaiting of velvet being placed underneath the scallops. The train was seemingly caught back by two very wide V-shaped revers of cream satin, bordered with a narrow embroidery in silver thread and crystal beads. The skirt-front was in cream satin, embroidered all over with scattered peacock's feathers in crystal beads, the eye of each feather being formed of a flat oval imitation sapphire. A row of these feathers bordered the skirt-front, from which a fringe of crystal beads fell over the hem.

Rumour, after the Prince of Waldemar's marriage, carefully arranged a marriage between the Princess Victoria, second daughter of the Prince and Princess of Wales, and the Duc d'Orleans, the second son of the Comte de Paris. This, of course, is only another of those silly reports about the future of the Prince of Wales's children that are circulated without the least foundation.

HER MAJESTY the Ex-Empress of the French has derived benefit from the grape cure, and certainly of all remedies it would seem to be the most agreeable but for the attendant disagreeable, a sore and tender tongue, through the constant operation of rasping by the number of pounds to be got through for benefit. The quiet and monotonously regulated life and the strict diet do as much as the grape.

It is expected that the Duke of Connaught will shortly receive an appointment abroad, as it is understood his residence at Bagshot Park is to be closed for two years.

The marriage of Mr. Hugh Seymour Hughes, eldest son of Mr. and Lady Florentia Hughes, of Kinnel, with Miss Mary Stewart Hodgson, eldest daughter of Mr. J. Stewart Hodgson, of Lythe Hill, Haslemere, was celebrated recently at St. George's, Hanover-square. The bride wore a simply-made dress of cream satin, with a very long train of broché silk, the bodice being trimmed with pearly lace and orange blossom; she wore a wreath of orange blossom and tulle veil, and carried a lovely bouquet.

Master Francis Hodgson, who bore her train, wore a ruby velvet coat, trimmed with gold braid and buttons, and white silk waistcoat and knee breeches, with lace ruffles.

The six bridesmaids, sisters and cousins of the bride and bridegroom, wore tasteful dresses of coffee lace over white silk, with dark red velvet collars, cuffs, and bretelles, and dark red velvet hats, trimmed with ospreys to match. Each wore a dark blue enamel brooch, surrounded with pearls, with the initials of the bride and bridegroom in brilliant (the gift of the latter), and carried a bouquet of red chrysanthemums and maidenhair fern.

Mrs. Stewart Hodgson, mother of the bride, was attired in a dress of striped brown and old-gold velvet and silk, made with a Zouave bodice, and brown velvet bonnet, with old-gold feather.

Viscountess Wolsley wore black satin, with petticoat and trimmings of old Oriental brocade, and grey for bordering; bonnet to harmonise.

The bride travelled in a dark blue dress, looped over a petticoat of striped red velvet, and hat to match.

## STATISTICS.

**TELEGRAPH WIRES.**—The longest spans of overhead telegraph wire in the world have recently been put up by the French authorities in Cochinchina. These are erected across the River Mekong, posts 160 feet high having been placed on each side of the river at a spot where the width is 2,560 feet; and from these silicious bronze wires—one, of an inch and the other, of 5/8 of an inch in diameter—are suspended across the stream. Over a tributary of the river another similar connection has been made, 1,670 feet span and more than 114 feet above flood water. The former of these is a span of 0.46 of a mile.

**THE POPULATION OF THE SANDWICH ISLANDS.**—The census of the population of the islands was taken on December 26, 1884, the last preceding census having been taken on December 27, 1878. During the six years the population had increased by 22,593, but the number of the native inhabitants had diminished by 4,074, leprosy being, as is well known, the chief cause. The total number of natives now in the islands is 40,014, and of foreigners 40,564, of whom 17,934 are Chinese. As to sex, 51,539 are males and 29,039 females. This great discrepancy of the numbers of the sexes is to be set down to the predominance of men among the foreign residents. There are only 871 women among the nearly 18,000 Chinese.

## GEMS.

It is easy to flatter. It is harder to praise. Always tell the truth; you will find it easier than lying.

Do not wait to strike till the iron is hot, but make it hot by striking.

Work with all the speed and ease you can, without breaking your head.

There are two things to be dreaded, the envy of friends and the hatred of enemies.

Virtue will catch as well as vice by contact; and the public stock of honest, manly principle will daily accumulate.

A soft voice is a most excellent thing in a wife. It soothes all irritation, cheers the heart in health, and the soul in dying.

If men had only temptations to great sins, they would always be good; but the daily fight with little ones accustoms them to defeat.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

**RECENT COLD.**—A teaspoonful of sal-volatile, taken in a small quantity of water or white wine whey at bed-time, is a good remedy for a recent cold. Bathing the nose in warm water is also a great relief.

**SPECIAL CUP OF TEA.**—To make a delicious cup of tea, put the teapot with the tea in it into the oven, let it remain till hot, then add boiling water, and in a short time you will have better tea than that made in the ordinary way.

**RECIPE FOR BURNS.**—For a burn by vapor or by any similar cause, apply the white of eggs, mixed with powdered chalk, and lay it over the parts burnt with a feather, and it will afford immediate relief. We have seen this tried most successfully to a child who had accidentally taken some vitriol into its mouth.

**YELLOW STAINS.**—Yellow or orange stains generally result from the use of nitric acid or turmeric. Thus 21 ounces finely powdered turmeric are digested for several days in 17-5 ounces 80 per cent. alcohol, and then strained through a cloth. This solution is applied to the articles to be stained. Nitric acid diluted with 3 parts of water is likewise used. A hot concentrated solution of picric acid can likewise be used.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

**PLEASURE OF EATING.**—Humanity, wherever placed, considers eating the superlative pleasure. Savages, when pleased, smile and make gestures indicative of the pleasures of eating. Petherick says the natives on the Upper Nile rubbed their stomachs when he showed them beads. The Australians, says Leichardt, smacked their lips and clacked their tongues when they saw his horses and kangaroo dogs; while the Greenlanders, according to Cranz, when they affirm anything with pleasure, suck down the air with a queer sound.

**ABNORMAL APPETITES.**—While the normal appetite usually indicates the amount of food demanded to repair the waste caused by the ordinary exercise, with the kinds specially demanded to meet present necessities, this appetite may be so moulded, by unnatural habits, as to become wholly unreliable. It is a creature of accident, and may be made or unmade at will, changing to the extent of our changes of habits. Any article, however distasteful, even to the natural taste, by a systematic and continued course, may be made to become the most agreeable to the taste (vitiated, of course,) of any known substance. If one may so far reverse nature, so far violate physical law, so revolutionise the taste as to relish the taste of tobacco, any known article may be tolerated and enjoyed! And here, it may be remarked, that the more repulsive any article may be, the greater the effort required to establish a habit, the more the system is vitiated in the formation of such a habit, the stronger that habit will become, making its victim a slave. It is as true that the gratification of such morbid appetites, demanding unusual violence to nature, the less will be the real pleasure of such gratifications, as nature always institutes a "drawback" on all infringements of her laws. It follows, therefore, that the use of the simple foods, rich in natural nourishment, with a normal appetite, will afford the greatest amount of pleasure to the taste, in accordance with a general law in morals, that it is always safe and profitable to be right.

**THE WATS OF BANGKOK.**—There is nothing like them elsewhere in the world. They are very curious, these temples or wats as they are called, surmounted by their towers and surrounded by their prachedes, which are sepulchral pagodas or spires, rising sometimes to the height of 200 feet. And as the temple sometimes combines the prachedes, and the prachedes appears in infinite number and in a variety of forms, it is hard to give a description of the combination that can be understood. A wat, like the temples of China and Japan, comprises many buildings, usually covering several acres of ground. The two main buildings may be sixty or seventy feet long by about the same height, narrow, and with a sort of semi-gothic windows. So built they resemble Episcopal chapels in England and America. But the roofs, or the series of roofs, with coloured borders that lie closely on one another, each superimposed one a little within the one below it, sometimes run over and are supported by columns, which encircle the building and greatly change its appearance. Of buildings of this class there may be several in the group. From each end of the ridges rise long, slender ornaments like huge claws, which are fantastic but effective. The prachedes are irregularly disposed about the main building, the lower part like a pyramid or dome, the upper like a tower or spire, which tapers to a mere thread if height is desired. The altitude of the majority, however, does not exceed twenty or thirty feet. I am not attempting to describe the wat, but to show its general effect in the landscape, for with its magnificent, lofty towers, the clear outline of its painted roofs, its many prachedes showing their graceful needles against the growing horizon, it makes its fine presence felt in a graceful and conspicuous way. There are over a hundred wats in Bangkok.

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

W. M.—No House is required.

R. W. F.—The young fellow is evidently jilting you. Give him up as wholly unworthy your notice.

R. G. H.—An apprenticeship indenture may be legal although not drawn by a lawyer. Whether an apprentice may work piecework depends on the terms of the indenture and the custom of the trade.

C. M. S.—"Dum spiro spero" is Latin for "While I breathe I hope." "Da nobis lucem Domine" means "Give us light, oh, Lord." Your writing is good, and only requires continual practice for its improvement.

S. V.—To restore faded writing, get one ounce of powdered nut-gall, boil it for some time in a pint of white wine, wet the paper with it, and the writing will be revived.

CAROLINE G.—The only methods we can suggest are either to advertise full particulars in the *Times* newspaper and in the Australian papers, or put the matter in the hands of a respectable solicitor.

VOLUNTEER.—The course of a rifle ball is very nearly a parabola, the curve or trajectory being the result of three forces—the impulse of the gun, the resistance of the atmosphere, and gravitation.

LILY F.—A good substitute for apple sauce is to boil a pint of treacle for about five-and-twenty minutes, then add three eggs, well beaten, hastily stirring them in, boil a little longer, and season with lemon and nutmeg.

LAURENCE G.—The so-called ancient forms never died out, but are nearly all found, even in the more cultivated modern Greek of the middle age. Greek is now, says Geldart, "as really alive as it was in the days of Homer." Modern Greek resembles the ancient language fully as much as current English does the English of Chaucer.

R. S. C.—The custom of shaking hands originated with the Romans. They had a goddess whose name was Fides or Fidelity. She wore a white veil, emblematic of modesty; her symbol was two right hands joined, therefore in all compacts among the Greeks and Romans it was usual to take each other by the hand to signify their intention of keeping the agreement.

B. B. H.—Leaving your house does not exonerate you from payment of your taxes. The parochial authorities can sue you for all dues. As for assessed taxes, no amount of time will relieve you from them, providing the authorities choose to demand them, and at Somerset House the names of all defaulters are passed from one collector to another.

G. P. M.—A good weather-glass may be made as follows:—Two drachms of camphor, half a drachm of pure saltpetre, half a drachm of muriate of ammonia, and two ounces of proof spirits, in a glass tube or narrow phial. This will make a pretty sure weather-guide. In dry weather the solution will remain clear; on the approach of change minute stars will rise up in the liquid, while stormy weather will be indicated by the very disturbed condition of the chemical combination.

AMY G.—In order to produce a dark mahogany stain: Boil half pound of madder and two ounces of logwood in one gallon of water, and brush well over the wood while hot; when dry, go over the whole with pearl ash solution, two drachms to the quart. For a lighter stain: Put two ounces of dragon's blood, well bruised, into one quart of oil of turpentine; let the bottle stand in a warm place, shake frequently, and, when dissolved, steep the wood in the mixture.

A. R. R.—For a silvershing solution, add 15 drachms crystallised nitrate of silver to 250 drachms water, to which add 30 drachms cyanide of potassium; when dissolved, add 750 drachms of water in which 15 drachms of common salt has been dissolved. Clean the metal thoroughly and dip in a weak bath of nitric acid and water, rinse in clear water, and dip in the silver bath. The silvered wood mouldings are silver gilt or silver bronzed in the same manner as painters' gold and bronze signs and ornamental work.

C. B. C.—St. Francis Xavier, probably the greatest missionary of the Catholic Church, was descended from a noble family of Navarre, and after leaving the army for the church, joined "Ignatius Loyola," the founder of the Society of Jesuits. He was both a great and a good man, and devoted his life to Christianising the peoples of the far East, where after many years' sojourn in the performance of good works, he died at Macao, in China, in the year 1552.

LADY OF THE LAKE.—1. For removing blackheads that appear on the face: Cover the parts affected with a pomade consisting of kaolin four parts, glycerine three parts, scetic acid two parts, with the addition of a small quantity of some essential oil. 2. Tincture of cantharides and sweet oil—any chemist will give proper proportions—applied night and morning will make the hair grow. 3. Not without injury. 4. Of medium texture. 5. No, larger. 6. At the age of twenty-three. 7. Use prepared chalk as a dentifrice. 8. Fair, but slovenly. 9. About the same.

O. T. S.—Rest assured there cannot very well be two opinions among intelligent people as to the relative merits of narrow-minded and large-minded men; everybody would give the preference to the latter. But are you sure that the persons to whom you refer are narrow-minded? Do you not mistake concentration of thought and power for narrow-mindedness? Because a man concentrates all his thoughts, energies, and power

upon a few objects, or even upon one object, he is not necessarily a narrow-minded man. The fact that he spreads his thoughts and interests over many things is no proof of superiority; it may simply be an indication of weakness; a stream flowing from the mountains, spreading over a vast expanse, may only create a marsh, but had it been confined in a channel it might have become a sparkling, wholesome river; and the analogy holds good as to the human mind.

C. F. M.—"Aesthetics" is derived from the Greek word, signifying "perception," and is the science which treats of the beautiful; it has also been termed the sentiment of the pure, relating only to the ethereal; it is the language of the feelings; it is the longing of the soul for all that is good and holy, but which cannot by the aid of language be conveyed to another mind. We feel, we know how we feel, but we cannot make another clearly understand it.

P. W. W.—The most approved way of making ox-tail soup is the following: Cut up the tails, separating them at the joints, wash, and put them in a stewpan with some butter, add half-a-pint of water, and stir them over the fire until the juices are drawn, fill the stewpan with water, and add salt, cut the vegetables, add them with peppercorns and herbs gently, and simmer until the tails are tender, strain, thicken with flour, flavour with catsup and port wine.

## FOREVER.

Oh, teach me how I can forget  
That we have loved, or ever met;  
That I have watched love's sun low set—  
For ever.

You won my heart for all your own,  
And when you had forgotten grown—  
You left me weary, and alone—  
For ever.

The sun still rises as of yore,  
But I shall ne'er watch it more;  
Ah! would this weary pain were o'er—  
For ever.

I watch the twilight shadows, far,  
And watch the twinkling evening star;  
But, ah! my thoughts are where you are,  
For ever.

My thoughts are following after thee,  
I would thou were not cold to me;  
But what has been can never be—  
For ever.

My heart is wrung with bitter pain,  
And hot tears fall like ceaseless rain  
But love will never come again—  
For ever.

I could be happy yet with thee,  
If thou wouldst give thy love to me  
But, ah! alas, thou art not free—  
For ever.

But when at last my life is o'er,  
Safe on some peaceful, happy shore,  
I may be happy yet once more—  
For ever.

But oh, I think it could not be  
Unless you roamed those shores with me  
And you loved me—and you were free  
For ever.

A. I. P.

RHODA.—Decidedly no other exercise is equal to laughing: nothing acts so happily upon the chest; ten hearty laughs will do more to advance the general health and vitality than anything else; but, of course, you cannot laugh at will, so play with your children, introduce some games requiring competition and merriment, or any of the sports you can recall from your early experience. One good laugh is worth more than medicine to restore health.

PUZZLED HOUSEKEEPER.—Very few chandeliers are gilt; they are burnished and lacquered with yellow lacquer. Take the chandeliers to pieces, and boil in strong soda lye for a few minutes, brush over with a soft brush, pass it through a strong solution of potassium cyanide (a deadly poison), wash through a tubful of boiling water, dry in clean sawdust, wipe up bright with a wash leather, and relacquer. A pale gold lacquer consists of one gallon of methylic alcohol, ten ounces of seed lye bruised, and one and half-an-ounce of red sanders, dissolved and strained.

W. M. B.—The French system of enumeration runs in periods of three figures, such up to the highest numbers; but in the English system, when we get above millions, the denominations run in periods of six figures. For example, in the French system, after hundreds of millions, come billions, and a billion is expressed with ten figures—thus: 1,000,000,000. But in the English system, after hundreds of millions, come thousands of millions, tens of thousands of millions, hundred thousands of millions, and then billions; so that a billion is expressed in the English system by thirteen figures, thus: 1,000,000,000,000. In the French system, a trillion is written 1,000,000,000,000, and in the English system it is written 1,000,000,000,000,000.

T. K. A.—The sharp to any note is the half-tone above, and the flat to any note the half-tone below; on keyed instruments the whole tones are divided by the black keys used for playing these sharps or flats, but where the half-tones occur on the white keys, such as B and C and E and F, the white key has to do duty for a black one, thus for a B sharp the white key C natural is used, for E sharp F natural, for C flat B natural, and for F flat E natural.

SOFIA.—You ask what gentleness means. It must be carefully distinguished from the mean spirit of cowardice and the fawning of sycophants. It renounces no just right from fear; it gives up no important truth from flattery; but, on the contrary, requires a brave spirit and a fixed principle to give it any real value. It arises from that unaffected civility which springs from a gentle mind, and there is a charm in it infinitely more powerful than in all the studied manners of the most finished courtier.

F. T.—You may rest assured that whenever you hear music in a house that dwelling is tenanted by a happy family; if you hear a domestic going gleefully about her work, and lightening her labours with a song, you may take it for granted that she has neither a discontented temper nor a scolding mistress. In some houses the very purring of a cat is musical, and the warbling of a canary is often more soothing than the most dulcet of operatic voices, and the great recommendation of home music is that it is joy-speaking as well as joy-inspiring.

P. V.—Those who told you that you could not learn to play the pianoforte when arrived at the age of fifteen were to some extent correct; for the facility of finger required to form a good musician and a good touch is seldom acquired except the study is commenced when very young; still, let not that discourage you, for if you have a great love for the science, a good ear, much patience and perseverance, and plenty of time for intense practice (for remember that is absolutely necessary), you may attain your aim.

W. W. B.—You should send invitations to the church, to every one whose acquaintance you desire to keep up. The invitations should be in the names of the parents of the bride; who must bear the expense of sending them out. 2. The bride and groom may enter the church together—in this case the groom should go to his bride's house and take her to the church—3. If of late years it has become usual for the groom to await the bride in the church. He should stand near the clergyman and receive the bride from her father, who should lead her up the aisle.

M. T. D.—The ingredients for a winter salad are endive, marrow-and-greens, boiled beetroot, celery, and three or four hard-boiled eggs; cut the celery into thin pieces, cleanse the endive and marrow-and-greens, and arrange these high in the centre of a salad-bowl or dish; garnish with the hard-boiled eggs and beetroot, both cut into slices; then cover with the usual sauce, which is composed of hard eggs, the yolks beaten into a paste, a little mixed mustard, some white pepper, and cayenne, four tablespoonfuls of cream, a little oil and vinegar, and salt to taste.

B. T. A.—You have been rightly informed. There are convents or hospitals situated upon the summit of the great St. Bernard, one of the highest mountains in the Alps; they were founded in the tenth century by Bernard of Menthon, an ecclesiastic, to afford assistance and entertainment to the pilgrims in their journey to Rome. Some of the monks take care of sick travellers, and others search for those who have lost their way in the pathless regions of snow and ice; they make no distinction of age, sex, or religion, but, like the good Samaritan, consider distress as an undentable claim to their humanity and protection. Their dogs also exercise an astonishing sagacity in tracking travellers who have lost their way.

ESSENCE.—To make red, blue, and purple ink, used for rubber stamps. Red: Dissolve quarter ounce of carmine in two ounces of strong water of ammonia, and add one drachm of glycerine and three quarters of an ounce of dextrine. Blue: Rub one ounce of Prussian blue with enough water to make a perfectly smooth paste; then add one ounce of dextrine, incorporate it well, and finally add sufficient water to bring it to the proper consistence. Violet: Mix and dissolve two to four drachms aniline violet, fifteen ounces alcohol, and fifteen ounces glycerine. The solution is poured on the cushion and rubbed in with a brush.

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